

Saskatchewan's independent newsmagazine

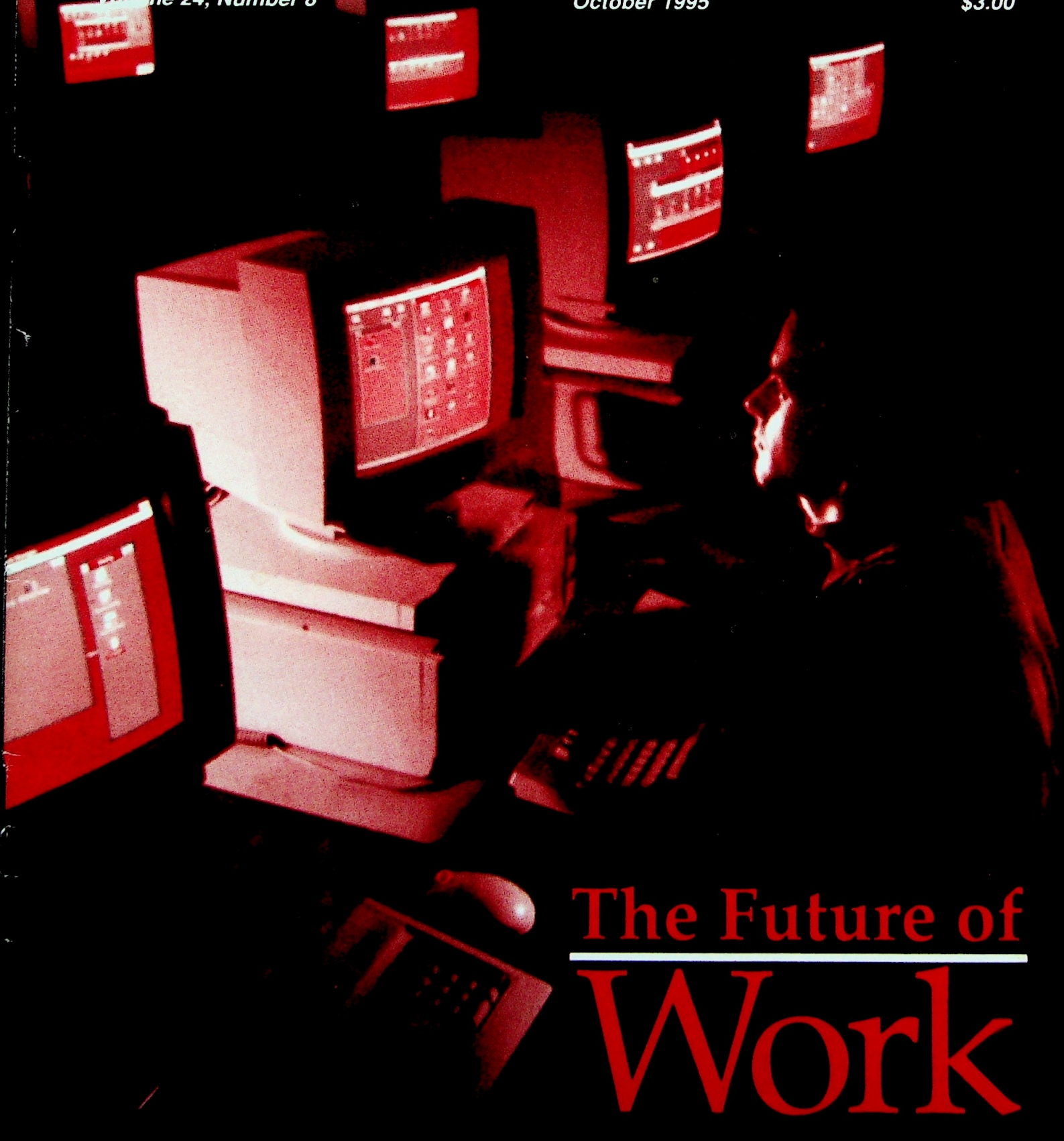
BRIARPATCH



Volume 24, Number 8

October 1995

\$3.00



The Future of

Work

Kids Camp



Fifty-five young people aged 13 to 16 attended a summer camp for the daughters and sons of trade unionists. The week-long camp was sponsored by the Saskatchewan Federation of Labour, the Canadian Labour Congress and their affiliated unions. The kids camp has operated for seven years with enrollment growing each year. The teenage campers took part in all the usual activities of a summer camp, as well as learning about social justice issues, fighting racism and working cooperatively.

Sudden Impact

The replacement of fully-staffed Canada Employment Centres with automated kiosks is going to create different levels of service across Canada and have a major impact on the unemployed in affected areas. The federal government is reducing the number of fully-staffed CECs from 270 to 98. As a result almost 200 communities will have their service severely reduced while CEC offices in 115 communities will be closed. Canadians will have to use fully-automated kiosks staffed by untrained community workers.

"While the government makes it sound wonderful by

providing kiosks in shopping malls and other areas, I have never heard of a kiosk being able to counsel an unemployed worker," said Cres Pascucci, national president of the Canada Employment and Immigration Union of the Public Service Alliance of Canada. "Unemployed workers require personal contact to guide them through a difficult time in their life. They don't need to call a 1-800 number from a telephone outside a kiosk to hear an automated message."

Overpaid?

The *Wall Street Journal* reports that profits are up 48 percent at major U.S. corporations. Much of the credit, says economist Mark Zandi, goes to corporate cost-cutting - especially in the area of labour costs. At the same time,



"It's not easy ordering these lay-offs... but that's why they pay me \$8.3 million a year."

according to *Business Week*, salaries of top executives rose 10 percent to an average of \$1,346 per hour. How much do you make?

On-to-Ottawa T-shirts

T-shirts and sweatshirts marking the 60th anniversary of the On-to-Ottawa Trek are available in a wide variety of sizes and colours from the Saskatchewan Federation of Labour. T-shirts are \$15 and sweatshirts are \$25. For order forms write to the SFL, #103-2709-12 Ave., Regina, SK S4T 1J3, or phone (306) 525-0197.



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Workplace Flexibility 13

Much of what passes for training these days involves convincing people that something called flexibility is the wave of the future. Those with the flexibility to adapt to rapid change, it is said, will prosper. Those who aren't flexible, well....

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Agile manufacturing has been hailed as the saviour of American industry, capable of assuring it of global supremacy. But as more workplaces begin to adopt the agile system of production, hundreds of thousands of work-

ramp for the Information Highway leads to a dead-end of boring, routine work in a permanently part-time work-force.

The New Democracy in Canada 29

Governments today are more concerned about the reaction of bond-rating agencies to their fiscal and policy decisions, than about the reaction of Canadian citizens.

Fewer Jobs, Longer Hours 33

There is a solution to the twin problems of staggering unemployment for some and overwork for others: the shorter workweek.

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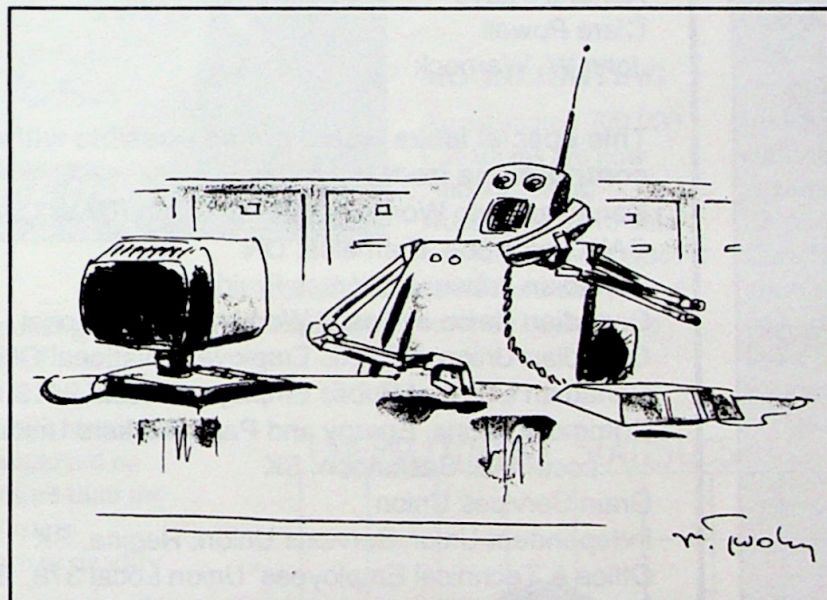
Unions will always develop in exploitative workplaces, whether they use cyberspace technologies or not.

Say What? 47

People say the darndest things.

Prairie Notebook 48

The days of finding a good-paying job are becoming a thing of the past.



"Personnel."

ers will lose their present full-time jobs, forcing them to be on-call and put to work only when corporations need them.

The Information Highway and the New Economy .. 23

Many people being urged to plug in, hook up and log on find that the on-

Briarpatch is Saskatchewan's independent alternative newsmagazine committed to building a socialist democratic society. We provide an open forum for disadvantaged peoples and support progressive movements working to change unjust structures and build a genuine political and economic democracy. We support peace, equality, democracy, social justice, Aboriginal self-determination, and the protection of the environment. We oppose the oppression of people on the basis of nation, class, race, gender, ability, and sexual orientation. Briarpatch magazine was founded in 1973 and is published ten times a year by Briarpatch Inc., an independent non-profit organization. Many of the articles and photographs in Briarpatch are contributed by volunteers.

Deadline for the receipt of articles is 45 days preceding publication. Unsolicited contributions will not be returned unless accompanied by a self-addressed, stamped envelope. Opinions expressed in the magazine are not necessarily those of the Briarpatch board of directors or staff. Articles may be reproduced provided proper credits are given. Briarpatch is a member of the Canadian Magazine Publishers Association and the staff are members of RWDSU Local 568. The Briarpatch office is at Huston House, 2138 McIntyre Street, Regina, S4P 2R7. Phone (306)525-2949. One year subscription: \$24.61. Unions & institutions: \$35.31. Publications Mail Registration No. 4171. ISSN 0703-8968. Membership in Briarpatch Inc. is open to groups or individuals upon application and payment of a \$1.00 membership fee. Briarpatch is indexed in the Canadian Periodical Index and Alternative Press Index and available on microform from Micromedia, 20 Victoria Street., Toronto, ON, M5C 2N8 and from the Underground Press Collection, 300 N. Zeeb Rd., Ann Arbor, MI, 48106-1346, U.S.A.

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The Labour Issue

Briarpatch is pleased to produce this special issue on the changing nature of jobs and work in the 21st century. Over 2,000 extra copies of this special issue have been produced and distributed among trade unionists across the country. We welcome our new readers and encourage you to subscribe.

We would like to thank the coordinators of this special issue:

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Guy Marsden

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This special issue would not be possible without the financial contributions from the following:

Canadian Auto Workers National Office (CAW-Canada)

CAW Local 584, Bramalea, ON

Canadian Labour Congress Prairie Region

Canadian Union of Postal Workers Regina Local

Canadian Union of Public Employees National Office

Canadian Union of Public Employees Local 2419, Regina, SK

Communications, Energy and Paperworkers Union of Canada
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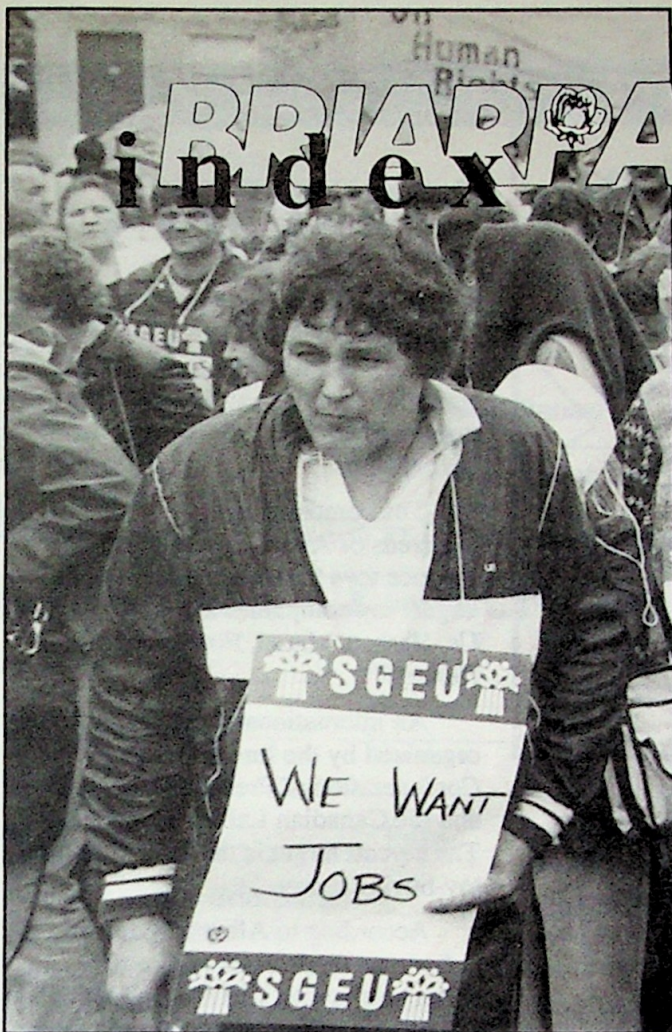
Saskatchewan Government Employees' Union

Branch 24 (Adult Education), Saskatoon, SK

Saskatchewan Government Employees' Union

SIAST/Academic Unit, Prince Albert, SK

Saskatchewan Union of Nurses



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its first year than it created. One typical example is Panasonic's TV factory in Chalco, near Mexico City, where production went up 30 percent in 1994, but the work was done by 50 fewer workers. Only a few dozen female workers inspect row upon row of TV circuit boards being assembled by new whirring robot arms. A year ago, many of those arms were human.

MOONLIGHTING

An estimated 700,000 Canadians are now "moonlighting" - working at more than one job. In most cases it

is because the income from one job is inadequate to meet their basic living costs.

YOUNG & RESTLESS

Young Canadians between the ages of 15 and 24, despite being the most highly educated generation Canada has ever produced, are increasingly finding it hard to obtain decent good-paying jobs. Only 40 percent of those who have found jobs are working on a full-time basis, compared to 70 percent of those 25 years or older.

SCHOOL WORK

Many Canadian youths are combining part-time work with full-time attendance at school, college or university. Of the 925,000 working youths employed part-time, 722,000 are also going to school.

DENY, DENY, DENY

Less than half of Canadians without jobs - 49.7 percent - now qualify for unemployment insurance benefits, down from 83 percent before a series of cutbacks begun by the Mulroney government and continued by the Chrétien government. As a result, Canada's UI system has dropped to 16th place among the 19 industrialized countries. Only the UI systems in the U.S., Britain and Japan are worse than Canada's.

JOBS NEEDED

One of the most urgent global problems is the quantity and quality of jobs. A 1994 study by the International Labor Office reported that 820 million people of working age were unemployed or underemployed. That is more than the total population of the Western Hemisphere, and the figure is steadily rising.

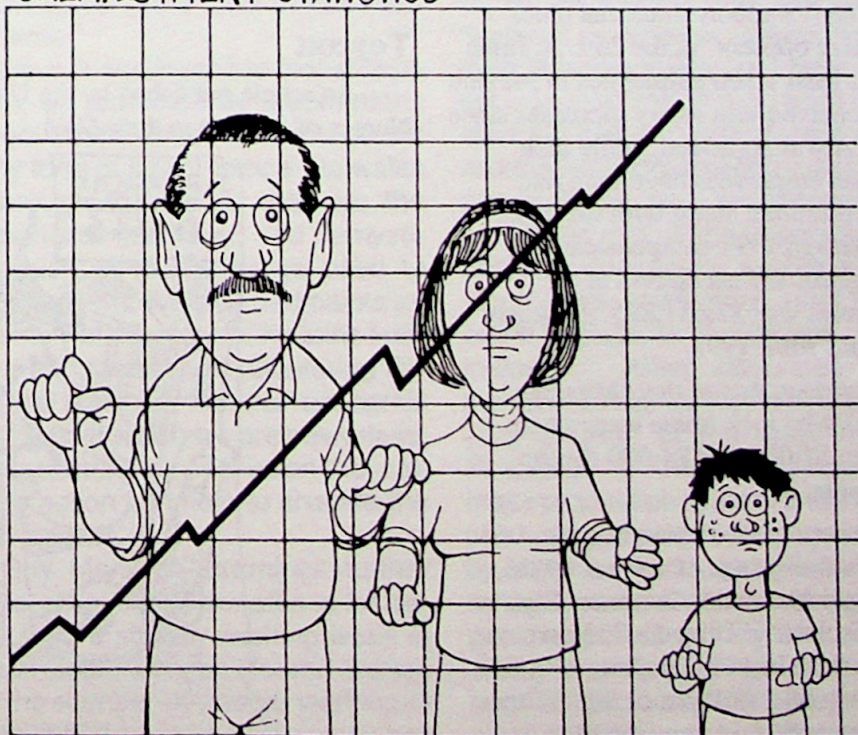
SPEED UP

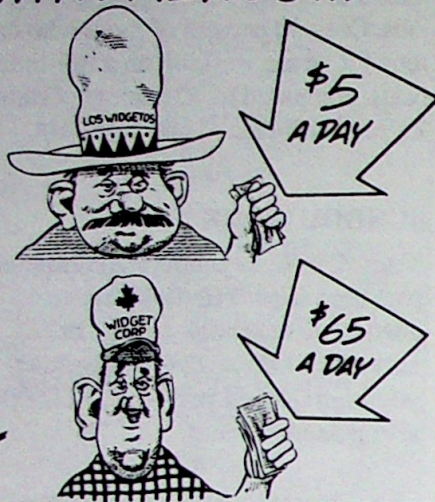
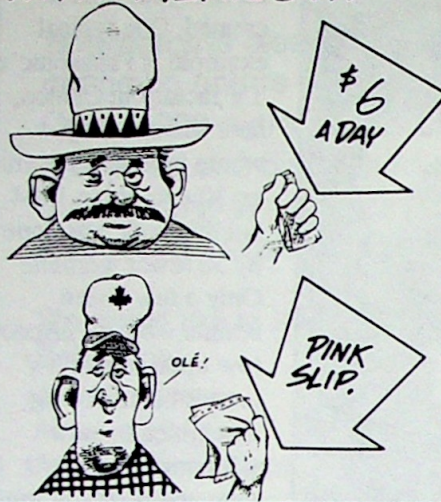
Back in 1982 Canada Post had 64,000 employees. By 1995 the corporation only employed 55,000 workers. Yet these fewer workers are now processing 321 pieces of mail per hour, compared to 196 in the 1980s. Today each letter carrier is calling on 54 points of delivery per hour, compared to 42 back then.

NAFTA SUCKS

Free trade with the U.S. is having the same effect in Mexico as it has in Canada: it has destroyed more jobs in

UNEMPLOYMENT STATISTICS



BEFORE FREE TRADE
WITH MEXICO...AFTER FREE TRADE
WITH MEXICO...

Winners & Losers

NAFTA has made both winners and losers. The winners are multinational corporations and their top executives. The losers are workers, whether they be Canadians, Americans or Mexicans.

A new report from the Institute for Policy Studies (IPS) in Washington, D.C. published in *Counterpunch* illustrates NAFTA's effects on both corporate executives and their workers in Mexico.

The IPS report finds that chief executive officers "at the 26 U.S. firms with at least 1,500 employees in Mexico have received vast salary increases since NAFTA was approved, while their Mexican employees have seen real wages plummet along with the peso. The average 1994 compensation package for top executives at the companies was \$2,651,825, up nearly one-third from 1993."

Compare this to their Mexican workers who took home somewhere between \$1,000 and \$4,000 for the entire year.

The study also examined the individual earnings of several CEOs, including Alexander Trotman, CEO at Ford. Trotman received a 320 percent pay increase in 1994, making a whopping \$8.1 million, or 2,003 times the average \$4,044 annual pay for

Ford's Mexican workers.

According to *Counterpunch*, Allied Signal, "a leader in the corporate drive for NAFTA, has during the past 18 months fired 260 workers at three U.S. plants, moving those operations to Mexico."

The study revealed that Allied Signal CEO Lawrence Bossidy made \$12.4 million in 1994, "substantially more than the total earnings - \$7.8 million - for Allied's entire Mexican labor force of 3,810 employees."

Toycott

An article published by the United Nurses of Alberta in their *UNA*

NewsBulletin will be interest to everyone who buys toys for their children or grandchildren.

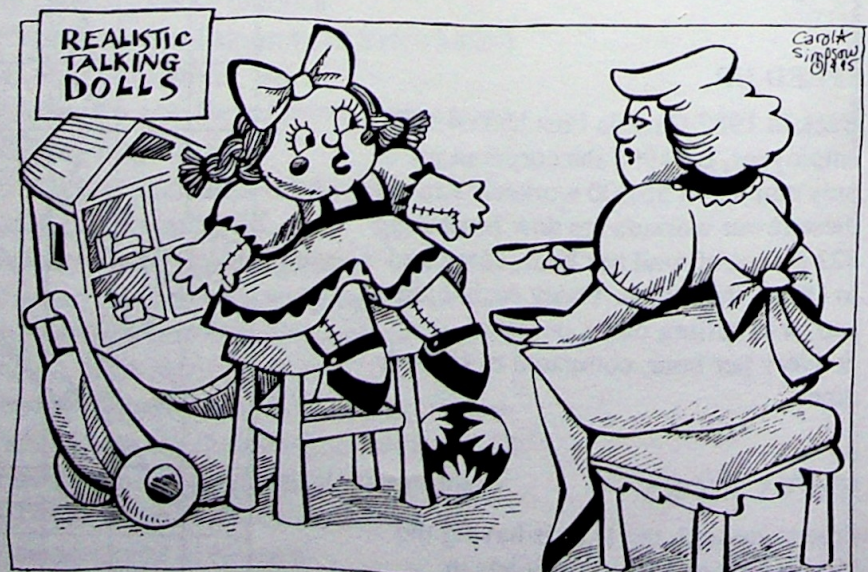
In 1993, a major fire swept through the Kadar toy factory near Bangkok, Thailand, killing 188 workers and seriously injuring another 496. The doors and windows of the plant were barred shut.

The company is just one of hundreds of Asian sweat-shops that produce toys for some of the world's largest toy companies including Toys 'R Us, Hasbro, Mattel, Fisher-Price and Kenner.

An international "toycott" has been organized by the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions and the Canadian Labour Congress. The toycott target is the 1995 Christmas toy-buying season.

According to Alberta Federation of Labour president Audrey Cormack, the primary objective will be to educate Canadian retailers and shoppers about how toys are being manufactured, and to encourage them to insist on toys that are made in factories which meet minimum labour standards such as child labour, health and safety, and hours of work.

Eventually, the aim is to have all toys meeting acceptable standards to be marked with a special symbol: a smiling teddy bear.



"I was made by an abused child in the Third World.
Please feed her first."

Who Calls the Shots?

Who benefits from the changing nature of jobs and work?

by Aina Kagis

In the months before the Saskatchewan government proclaimed amendments to the Labour Standards Act, a vociferous business lobby prophesied economic mayhem if employers were compelled by law to improve working conditions for their part-time employees. The amendments, proclaimed on February 4, 1995, reflected the government's commitment to business.

Early in March, the government announced that the CIBC would be opening a call centre in Regina. Jobs galore, we were told. Odd: no one mentioned that call centres, like catalogue shopping centres, are staffed largely by part-time workers. Oh well, it's just the global economy having its way with us - no one's in control, right? Nothing we can do, right?

Wrong, say contributors to this issue of *Briarpatch*. In writing about the changing nature of work and jobs, these writers also help us understand what or who causes the change and who benefits from it.

Sears and CIBC in Regina exemplify the alarming increase in part-time, generally low wage jobs. Heather Menzies examines another facet of this increase in her article on "The Information Highway and the New Economy." She illustrates the ways that new computer technologies, conceived to serve the needs of business and the corporate economy, are creating more and more part-time, contract, contingent workers: isolated, monitored by their employers, trapped by fear of unemployment. Menzies protests the alleged inevitability of this trend, rejecting the notion that it's caused by an unfettered cosmic force called globalization. Human choice drives "globalization," she writes, and human choice

can and must reestablish the primacy of "the needs of people" over the needs of "the bottom line."

In "The New Democracy in Canada," Buzz Hargrove analyses the consequences of accepting that "the market" or "globalization" are omnipresent and irresistibly powerful. Powerful, certainly, he acknowledges, but because of the interests they serve, not because they exist as independent and uncontrollable forces in the universe. Like Menzies, Hargrove believes that, despite the growing irrelevance of ballot box democracy, we have the capacity and the need to act collectively, to reclaim our communities and our workplaces. He argues, for example, that collective action to limit working hours could "help to reduce unemployment and ensure that...some...gains of new productivity are captured in the form of more leisure time."

Dave Broad identifies global capitalism, as promoted by corporations and governments, as a terrible threat to any form of social justice. He walks us through the trends that are the hallmarks of this threat and demystifies much of the language used to describe them. While Broad paints an extremely bleak picture, he joins Hargrove and Menzies in countering the idea that there are "natural" economic laws against which we are powerless; he reasserts their conviction that collective action can help to shackle the "free" market.

Guy Marsden examines further the potential social benefits to be derived from a shorter working week in "Fewer Jobs, Longer Hours." Noting that the number of people working in excess of 40 and 50 hours a week has

increased in the last 20 years, he speculates that our focus should shift from the need to create more jobs to the need to redistribute "existing jobs more equitably." The 1994 Federal Advisory Group on Working Time and the Distribution of Work made 24 recommendations to the government about limiting overtime and making working fewer hours more appealing, but the recommendations have been shelved. Marsden believes that, given the business "community's" hostile response to even the most moderate of the Task Force's recommendations, trade unionists and other activists will have to work very hard to have the idea of a shorter workweek given serious consideration.

Canadian Manufacturers' Association president Stephen Van Houten recently predicted the demise of collective bargaining and claimed that "workers' gratification will have to come from learning things and having new experiences" rather than from negotiated job security and decent wages and benefits. Bruce Allen writes about one of these "new experiences" and concludes that, in the absence of collectively developed strategies, Van Houten-like predictions may indeed come to pass. In "Agility and the Autoworker," Allen describes "agile manufacturing" as the "fourth [production] system" in the auto industry. Preceded by the craft system, the mass production system and the "lean production" system (more work done by fewer workers), an agile manufacturing system, as its name might suggest, responds quickly and easily to changing competition and markets. Not surprisingly, computer networks and plenty of temporary and/or part-time

A message to our politicians: **Get some backbone !**

Instead of cutting funds for Medicare and firing health care workers, tax the 93,000 profitable corporations in this country that have revenue of \$27 billion annually and pay no corporate income tax.

Stop slashing Unemployment Insurance benefits to jobless Canadians, and tax the wealthy who are currently able to shelter their private fortunes in "family trusts".

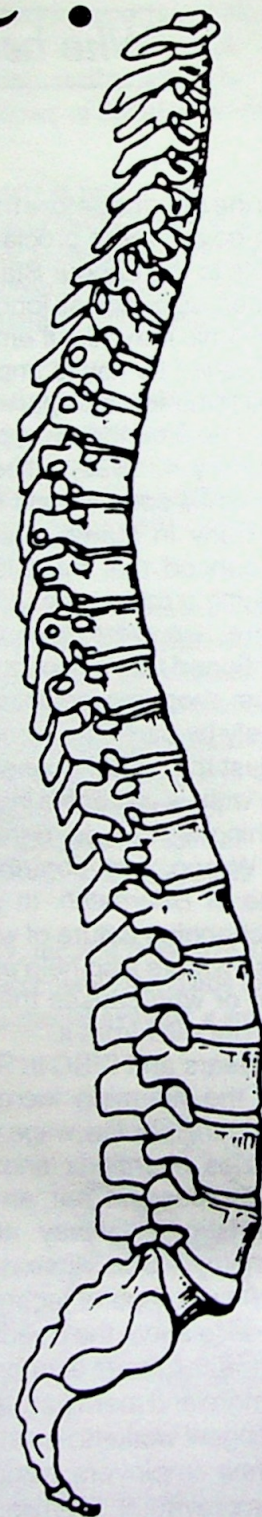
Rather than financially abusing social assistance recipients, collect the \$36 billion in deferred corporate taxes.

Don't de-index the old age pension or Guaranteed Income Supplement, but instead go after the 190 Canadians who earn more than a quarter of a million dollars a year, and pay no personal income tax, thanks to loopholes.

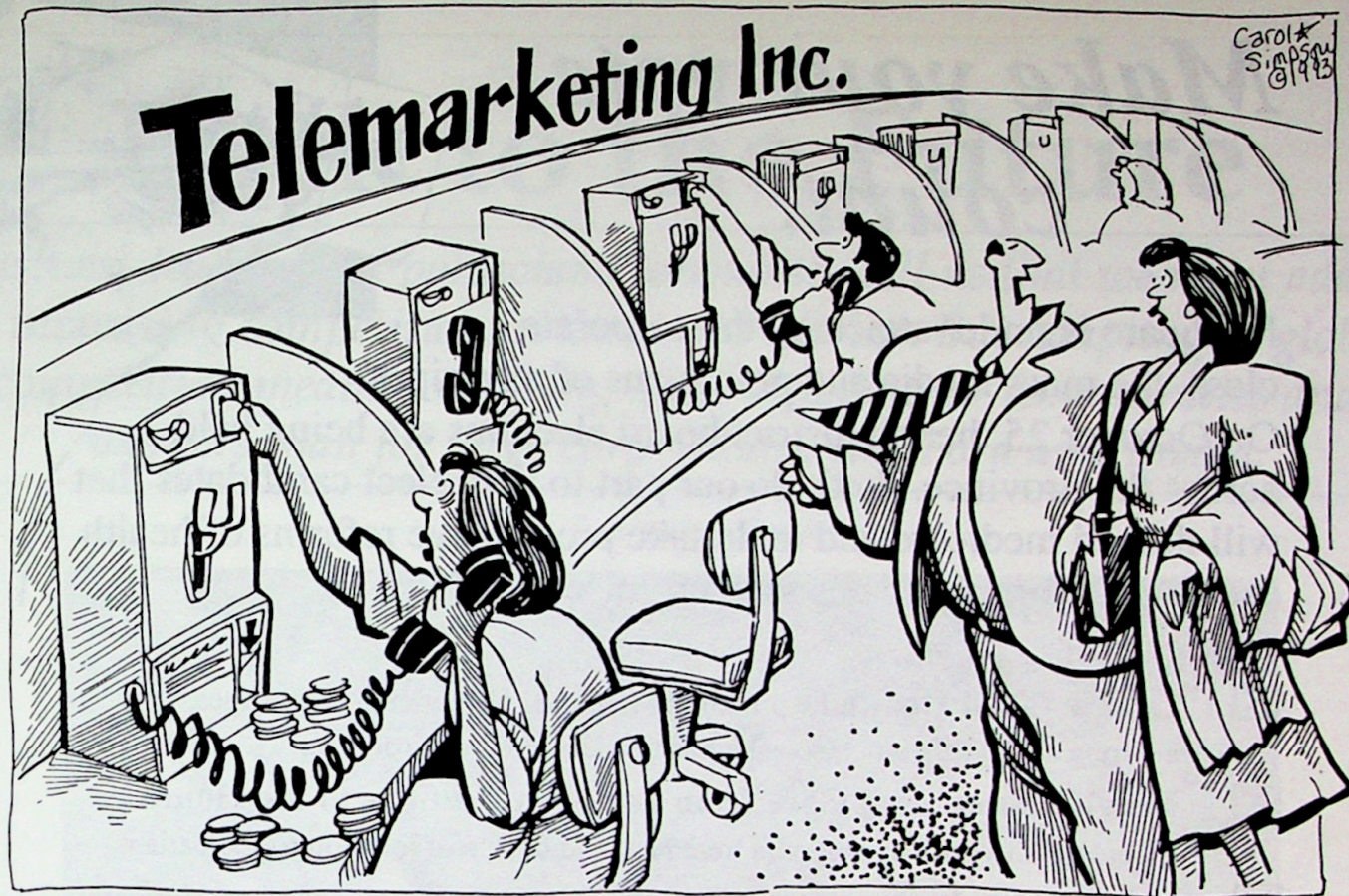
Forget about proposals to raise the retirement age to 67, and start taxing the 20 Canadian millionaires that paid less than \$100 in federal and provincial income tax three years in a row!

Attacking the poor, the sick, low income working people, students and pensioners is for the spineless.

Elected officials with backbone don't do it.



Saskatchewan Federation of Labour



"I hope you brought plenty of change."

workers figure in this new system. Allen envisions the possibility of autoworkers eventually "earning 19th century wages and enduring 19th century working conditions while using 21st century technology." His appeal for labour to respond to this new phenomenon, although framed as a warning, shares Broad's, Menzies' and Hargrove's premise that collective action is both necessary and possible.

Jamie Swift writes about what sounds like more workplace athleticism: flexibility. Imagine if you could have agility and flexibility in the same workplace. Like so much of the language with which people describe new kinds of work and workplaces (teams, quality, empowerment, high commitment, to name a few) flexibility sounds purely positive, especially when you think that lack of flexibility means rigidity. Unfortunately for the so-called flexiworkers at the Inglis plant in Cambridge, Ontario the new relationship they were encouraged to develop with their equally flexible bosses didn't save their jobs when the parent company closed their plant.

Swift makes reference to the 19th century Luddites, whose efforts to save their jobs have been characterized in most historical accounts as mindless inflexibility ("resistance to change" in 20th century human resources baflegab). Guy Marsden reviews *Progress Without People*, in which David Noble presents the Luddites in a considerably more flattering light. Marsden concludes that Noble's challenge to us to reexamine our acceptance of the new technologies as "progress" is well worth taking up.

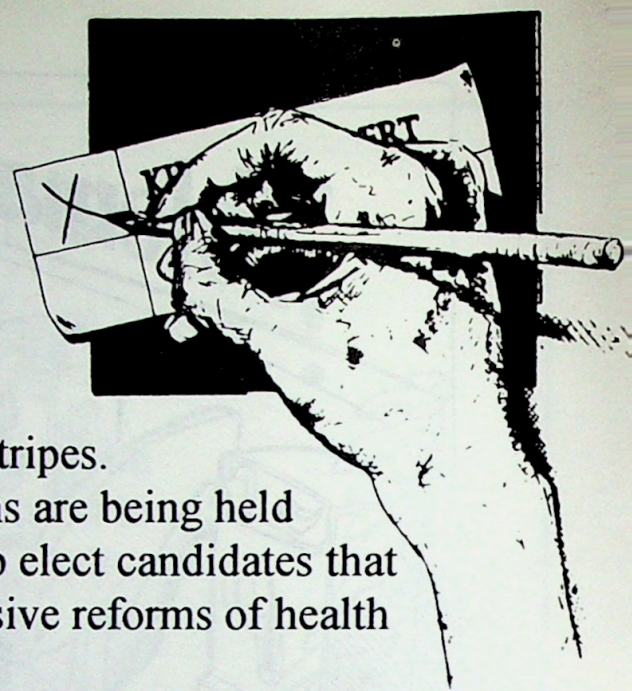
In "Organizing High-Tech Workers," Dave Coles argues that the computer is not the first technological innovation to dramatically change Canadian workplaces. Despite these past technological advances, history shows that unions continued to organize. Although today's workers may input data into computers or manufacture microchips, these new innovations do not "fundamentally change employee-employer relations." Coles writes that although unions must remain flexible in their organizing methods, unionizing unorganized workplaces in the

cyberspace age is both possible and necessary.

All these articles show that the "economic imperatives" to which proponents of new working systems insist we bow are human constructs, not immutable forces. We cannot let our governments, employers or ourselves look on helplessly as "global competitiveness," and the "aggressive economy" degrade our working lives. Without doubt, governments are abetting corporations (run by people, we must remember) in their efforts to ensure a huge pool of cheap labour. How else, for example, did Sears and CIBC get welcomed to Saskatchewan with open arms (and diluted labour laws)? Why else is workfare alive and well in Alberta, in the works in Ontario and under consideration in Saskatchewan? Our job is to name the agents of the allegedly unstoppable change and, as Heather Menzies writes, to pursue our own bottom line: "the bottom line of full and meaningful employment, and of equity and social justice."

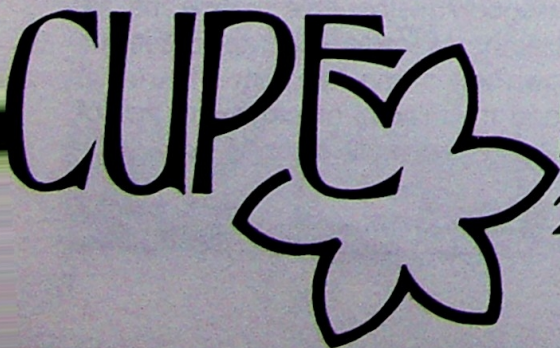
Aina Kagis works for CUPE in Regina.

Make your vote count!



Medicare is under attack by the corporate class, the mass media and politicians of all stripes. On October 25, health district board elections are being held across the province. Let's do our part to help elect candidates that will defend medicare and undertake progressive reforms of health care. Vote for candidates who promise to:

- ☒ **Create Good Health** by promoting full employment at decent wages, a strong social safety net, social housing and a clean environment.
- ☒ **Provide Integrated Care from Large Institutions to the Home** to ensure quality care, appropriate treatment and choice of location to the patient.
- ☒ **Protect Our Investment in Our Workers** by allowing workers to retain existing rights by encouraging unionization and providing reasonable job security.
- ☒ **Ensure Fair Wages for all Health Care Providers** instead of shifting the provision of health care to poorly paid workers and family caregivers.
- ☒ **Stop Fee for Service Payments** which encourage overbooking, over-prescribing and overtreating by physicians.
- ☒ **Eliminate Profit-Making from Illness** which will lead to an inequitable and inefficient two-tiered health care system.
- ☒ **Reduce Drug Costs** by reducing or eliminating overprescribing and fighting to repeal drug patent legislation which prevents the use of cheaper generic drugs.
- ☒ **Encourage Genuine Community Health Centres** that are user controlled, utilize a multi-disciplinary team approach by salaried personnel, and provide an array of services under one roof.
- ☒ **Expand the Role of Non-Physician Health Providers** such as nurses, midwives and others that can handle many procedures sometimes neglected by the medical profession.
- ☒ **Make the System More Democratic** by including patients, health care workers and the public in reform and evaluation of the system.



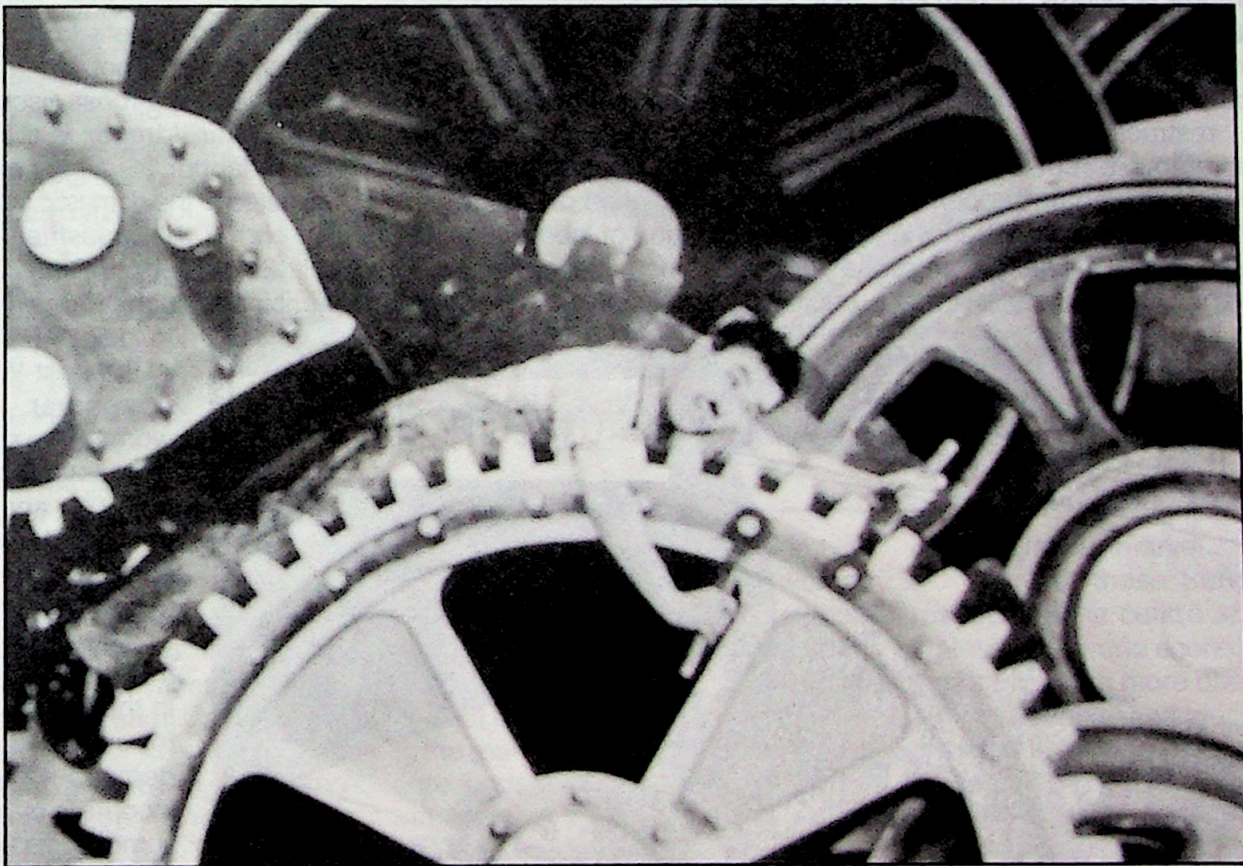
Saskatchewan

20,000 workers serving the public

Back to the Future

Business leaders and politicians constantly tell us that we must adapt to increasing competition in the world market. But adapting to global competition means something quite different for communities and workers than for large corporations like Ford and Toyota.

by Dave Broad



Unrestrained global capitalism is turning back the clock on the social welfare gains of the last century. Guided by the ideology of neo-liberalism, corporations and governments have been busy promoting "the free market" through global outsourcing (contracting out activities normally done in-house), layoffs, cutbacks, privatization and deregulation. For labour this means increasing unemployment and underemployment, deteriorating working conditions, and reductions in social welfare payments. How is labour to respond to this assault?

Global Economic Restructuring

First, it is important to understand the trends we are dealing with. Currently there is much discussion about a mysterious "globalization," which is seen as the product of a combination of market competition and a sort of natural unfolding of new technologies. But there is nothing mysterious about competition or technology. Competition in a capitalist market economy results from the drive of businesses to accumulate profits by producing goods and services faster and cheaper. And since the beginning of the Industrial Revolution the application of new tech-

nologies for market production has been driven by the same profit motive. For labour, this means being used as just another "factor of production," whose performance is measured by efficiency and cost. With the early Industrial Revolution this led, among other things, to the superexploitation of women and children, which continues in the Third World.

Trade unions and labour parties fought long and hard to improve living and working conditions, curbing the worst abuses of workers and their families in First World countries, and contributing to the expansion of the

welfare state. The decreased market flexibility and increased labour costs could be tolerated by business so long as large monopoly corporations could control markets and reduce costs through continued exploitation of the periphery. And, as Henry Ford discovered, paying workers a bit more caused an expansion of the market.

But with the global economic crisis that began in the early 1970s, business has had to look for ways to renew economic growth and confront the heightened competition that has come with economic stagnation. These attempts to renew economic growth are usually packaged under the heading "restructuring," which has become as much a buzzword as globalization. Corporate restructuring essentially refers to attempts to cut costs and regain control over labour - euphemistically treated as returning "flexibility" to the labour market. Business leaders and politicians constantly tell us that

What's Happening to Labour?

Under the umbrella of globalization, work and workers have been subject to a number of trends that are, like globalization itself, not new, but deepening. Most obvious is the increase in unemployment and underemployment, as businesses "downsize" and "shed labour" to reduce production costs. The International Labour Organization "estimates that 30 percent of the world's labor force of about 2.5 billion people is either unemployed or underemployed," and expects this situation to worsen. In addition, global restructuring has produced or accelerated processes referred to in the literature on work as degradation of labour, feminization of labour, housewifization of labour, informalization of labour, casualization of labour, and peripheralization of labour.

"Degradation of labour" has been a constant since the beginnings of capitalist production, and especially

cogs in the machine. They experience degrees of alienation that make the conventional economic term "factors of production" most appropriate.

According to propaganda surrounding the current phase of restructuring, the alienation and degradation of mass production work is a thing of the past. We are told workers are now the happy beneficiaries of Quality of Working Life (QWL) and other such programs. But the degradation of labour continues. Use of new technologies like computers and robotics ostensibly allows mass production to be replaced by more stimulating "teamwork." Although some workers do benefit from these processes, most do not.

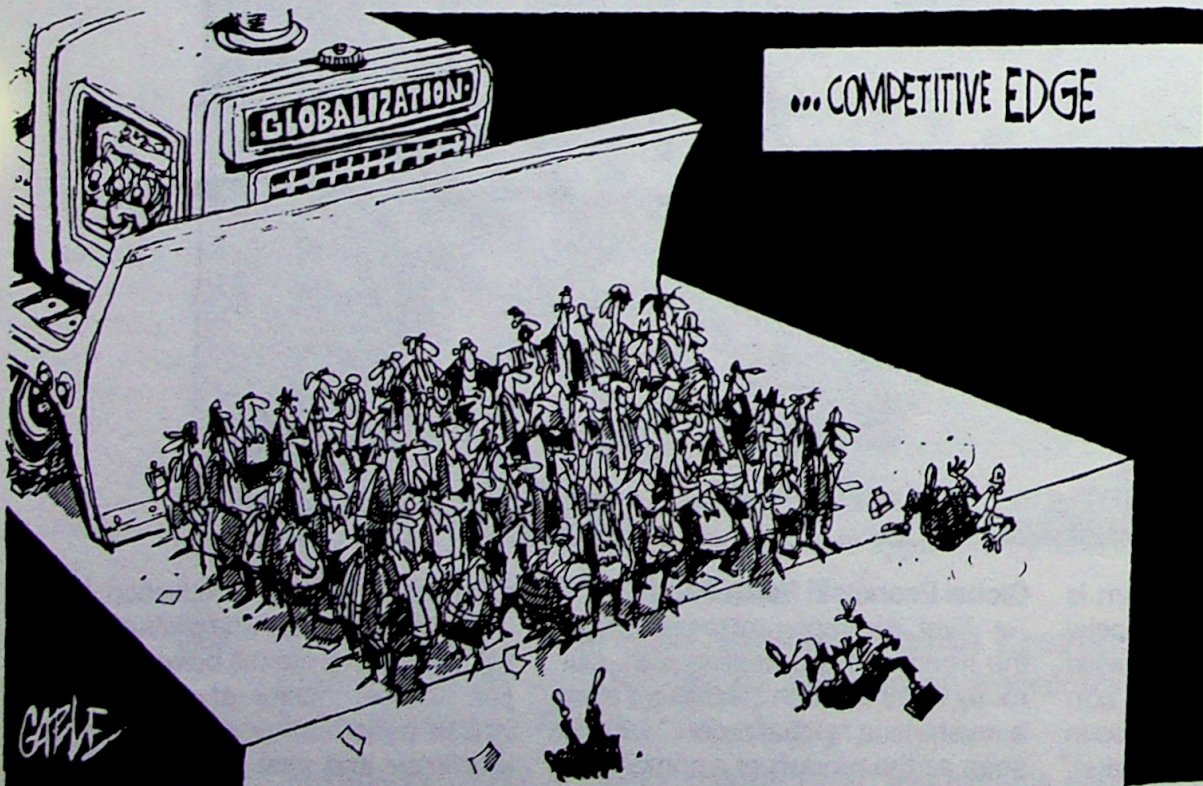
One of the most discussed post-World War II trends is the "feminization of labour." Having been formally relegated to the domestic sphere toward the end of the Industrial Revolution, only 24 percent of Canadian women participated in the formal labour force

in 1951. With the growth of the post-World War II consumer society, women's participation increased to 40 percent by 1971, and to 60 percent by 1991. But this change did not amount to a liberation of women.

Many women entered the formal labour market in the 1950s and 1960s to satisfy the growing demand for household income to purchase consumer items like cars and "labour-saving" conveniences. But the labour that was saved from old menial tasks was taken up with operating the new household gadgets. One set of "women's work" was replaced by another.

And women were still left with most family responsibilities.

In the formal economy women found themselves as the main labour force for the growing service sector, doing the most degraded, low-status, low-waged work - again "women's work," actually an extension of domestic work to the formal economy. In



we must all adapt to increasing competition in the world market. But adapting to global competition means something quite different for communities and workers than for large corporations like Ford or Toyota. The opposed interests of capital and labour have been made quite obvious by this recent phase of globalization.

since the Industrial Revolution. It is a process whereby workers have been separated from control of their work and subjected to a deskilling that has, in the worst cases, made them little more than the automatons depicted so well by Charlie Chaplin in his film *Modern Times*. Workers in assembly line mass production are often little more than

1991, 71 percent of formally employed women, as opposed to only 30 percent of men, were concentrated into five occupational groups (teaching, nursing, clerical, sales, and service), with most being in the low-paid service sector.

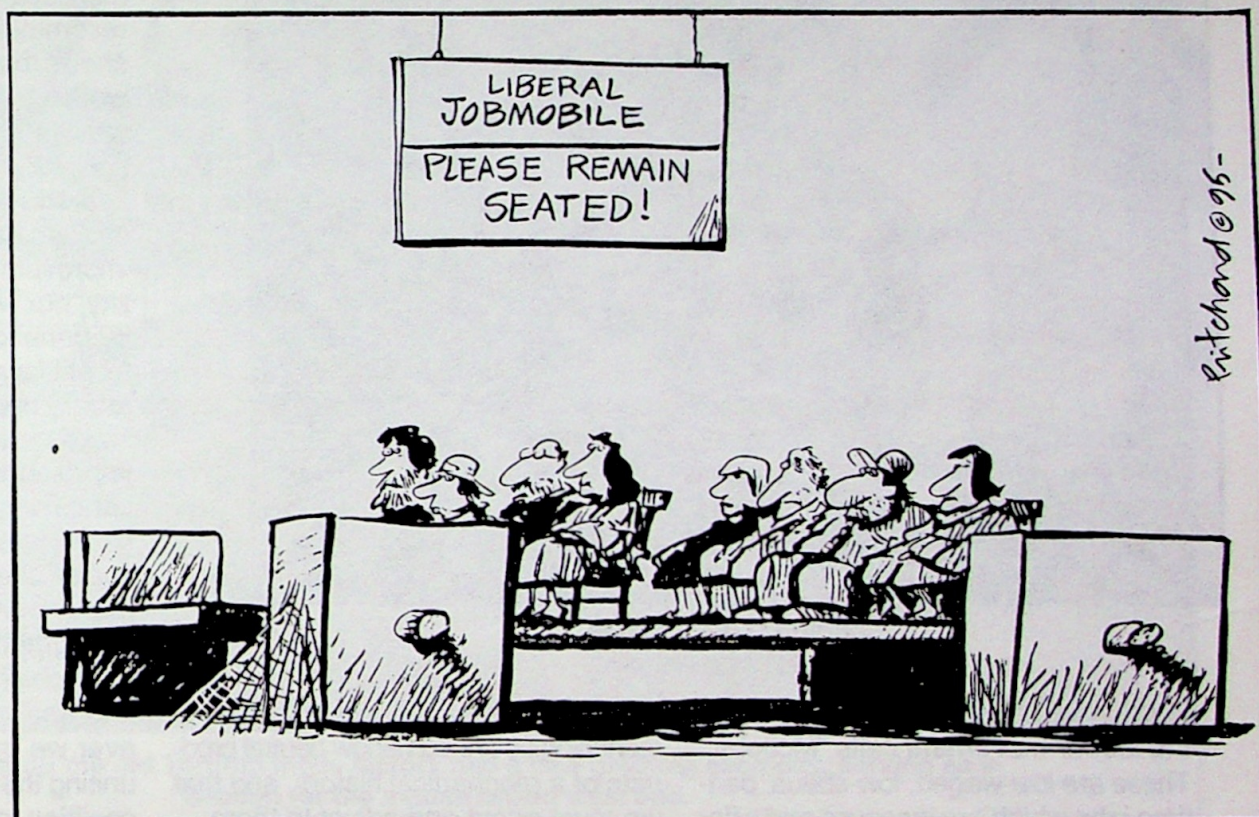
Related to the feminization of labour is what Maria Mies and her colleagues call the "housewifization of labour." The term is used to refer to a process whereby, not only the work-force, but work itself is taking on the characteristics of housewifery. Increasingly formal work is low-status, low-paid and ostensibly low-skilled, but with employers expecting the ingenuity and output typical of housework. And here we are not talking only about the work women do, but that done by men as well. Considering this trend, Claudia von Werlhof tells us that the vision of the future is not the full-time waged worker - the proletarian worker of lore - but the peasant and the housewife.

Along with housewifization of formal labour, we find the "informalization of labour." By most accounts, including that of Revenue Canada which sees a conspiracy to evade taxes, informalization is a growing phenomenon. As corporations "shed" workers and "outsource" to the Third World, people must resort to the informal economy to survive. But capital also resorts to the informal economy to cut costs of production. This can take a number of forms, including an increase in unregulated sweatshop production, and farming out textiles and electronics work to women in the home - industrial "homeworking." The Japanese economy depends upon a "tier system" whereby specialty parts manufactured in back alley workshops find themselves in the newest Nissan or Toyota rolling off the line.

Informalization also means returning the onus for reproduction of fami-

lies and workers to the home - meaning to women. This is the disguised intent of a lot of right-wing discussion which laments the decline of "the family," suggesting that many of our social problems would disappear if we would just return to so-called traditional val-

voluntarily" part-timers, and many others (primarily women) reporting that they do not want full-time work because of family responsibilities. Organized labour argues that employers have been using casual labour to cut wage and benefit costs and reassert their control



lies. Of course, the "traditional family" is a myth, tied to the myth that women did not work outside the household until the 1960s. At the risk of being called "politically correct," I don't imagine that most women relish their return to the real traditions of combining child care, housework and part-time formal employment.

This leads us to a trend some British researchers call the "casualization of labour." The mid-Twentieth Century picture of the full-time proletarian wage worker, male or female, as the vision of the future has surely been dispelled by the expansion of part-time, short-term, contract and other sorts of casual labour. According to studies by the Economic Council of Canada and Statistics Canada, so-called non-standard or contingent labour now makes up two-fifths of the Canadian labour market. Casual labour is the fastest growing type of labour, with over one-third of part-timers reporting to Statistics Canada that they are "in-

over the labour market.

Many of these trends apply to restructuring in centre and periphery states of the world economy, but their impact appears more dramatic in rolling back labour and welfare gains in the First World. As working and living conditions here come to look more like the Third World norm, some writers say we are experiencing a "peripheralization of the centre," or "Latinamericanization" of the United States and Canada. This certainly seems to be the case with moves like the Canada-U.S. Free Trade Agreement and NAFTA which, contrary to statements by the proponents of free trade, are creating a level playing field that lowers standards downwards.

We see this levelling down both in terms of general living standards in Canada and the United States, with increasing inequality, homelessness and need for food banks and soup kitchens, and in terms of labour standards, with more and more workers



photo: Tony Fouthse

unemployed or underemployed at what the labour movement calls "McJobs." These are low-waged, low-status, part-time jobs which are insecure and offer few benefits. The Economic Council of Canada called these "bad jobs" and, along with others, forecast the highest rates of employment growth in such work.

What Is To Be Done?

There are a number of things we can do to counter these trends.

First, we must challenge the current neo-liberal dogma that there is no alternative but to bow to the "laws of capital markets," as Paul Martin calls them. Adherence to the notion that there are natural economic laws akin to the law of gravity prevents us from doing what is necessary to resolve the crises of poverty, inequality and environmental destruction. Economic systems are human inventions, and if the one we have is not serving the needs of the world's people, we must invent a better one.

Second, we can pull the plug on technologies that are degrading workers and the planet. We must dispute

the all too prevalent assumption that technologies are somehow neutral products of a mechanical history, and that we must adapt and adjust to them.

Third, we can follow the advice of those arguing for better labour standards laws, nationally and internationally. In Saskatchewan we can pres-

sure the government to proclaim those provisions of the recently-revised Labour Standards Act that the NDP watered-down to appease business interests.

The Saskatchewan labour standards story leads to a fourth recommendation, on which the previous three recommendations depend. History shows that improvements to living and working conditions will not be gained without strong social movements to fight for them. We have seen this in past struggles for labour rights and improvements in social welfare. Such improvements did not drop from the sky, nor were they bequeathed freely by benevolent politicians. They were fought for and won by workers, women, racially oppressed groups and the colonized on the periphery. Where these improvements in living and working conditions have been stalled or rolled back, is where the movements for social change have faltered. These movements must be revived and strengthened. And, given the deepening globalization of capitalist exploitation and oppression, now more than ever we must accelerate the work of uniting these movements into a global coalition for social justice.

Dave Broad teaches in the Faculty of Social Work at the University of Regina.





The sign atop the old Toronto Inglis factory had a new greeting each day, serving as a beacon for the industrialized west end.

photo: David Smiley

Workplace Flexibility

Much of what passes for training these days involves convincing people that something called flexibility is the wave of the future. Those with the flexibility to adapt to rapid change, it is said, will prosper. Those who aren't flexible, well....

by Jamie Swift

It all comes into focus as you sit motionless in the six-lane parking lot that is Toronto's Gardiner Expressway. A flashy four-wheel drive disco edges up beside you, the numbing thump of its sound system boring its way into your skull. The driver and his girlfriend look successful, like they've just left the set of a Labatt Blue commercial. Office towers loom on the left. The view of the lake is slightly obscured by a pall of

automotive haze and a wall of luxury condos.

Your mind wanders, searching for a clue as to what spawned all of this. Up ahead Inglis, an old name in the manufacture of washing machines, has put up a billboard on the roof of one of its abandoned factories: "KNOWLEDGE IS POWER."

It's a slogan of the post-industrial age, the information society. Those

with the flexibility to adapt to rapid change, it is said, will prosper. Those who aren't flexible, well....

Pat Kopita knows all about knowledge, flexibility and the rest of it. She makes electric garbage compactors for Inglis in Cambridge, Ontario. She was forced to take a pay cut and chase her job to Cambridge when the firm (controlled by Whirlpool of Michigan) shut down its operation in Stony Creek,



Old style assembly forced workers to work elbow to elbow. Strong bonds and friendships were formal and maintained, reinforced by the organization of production.

photo: David Smiley

near Hamilton.

Then she signed up for Inglis's experiment with Hi-Commitment production. Work teams replace the traditional assembly line. The workers were told that if they didn't adapt to the new way of doing things there was every chance the plant would head south. She became flexible, doing several different tasks instead of one repetitive job.

There are no lead hands, no foremen. Above Kopita's work area there

is, however, a flashing message board just like the ones in bank windows that advertise the latest RRSP rates. The message at the Inglis work area blinks out the number of compactors the teams have produced and the number of flawed units. It also adds with monotonous regularity: "Good Work!" "Today's Quality is Tomorrow's Customer!"

As a member of a lean team, when she misses a shift because of illness or is on union business, it puts extra

pressure on her "team mates." She no longer has her former supervisor on her back about this. The teams are allegedly autonomous, with management reluctant to spring for replacements. So Pat Kopita's new supervisors are her own co-workers. Their frustration was mainly directed against her because she wasn't replaced.

"When I'm away, it makes it harder for them," she frowns. "Instead of the team working with six people, it was working with five. They started complaining and yelling at *me*."

The Brave New World of Work

New methods of making things and organizing work have spawned huge changes to the brave new world of work. We see the evidence all around us.

Between 1979 - when Sony introduced its Walkman - and 1992, the company introduced 227 different models of a product that had never existed before. Beer-drinkers know all about this. As recently as the late seventies they could choose from a limited selection of brews that came in one standard bottle, the short, brown stubby. Within 15 years Canadians would come to face a dizzying choice of lite and dry and ice beers. Dozens of containers replaced the stubby.

Computerization provides a huge spur to what has been dubbed flexible specialization because equipment can easily be reprogrammed and put to new uses producing new products without expensive and time-consuming rebuilding or retooling operations.

"If the computer appears to be the cause of industrial flexibility," conclude Michael Piore and Charles Sabel in an influential study of these issues, "this is probably less because of its application than because, malleable as it is, it has helped crystallize the vision of a flexible economy just as the costs of rigidity were becoming obvious. Computer technology is a kind of magic mirror...."

If it is a magic mirror, it is one that reflects some age-old trends and conflicts.

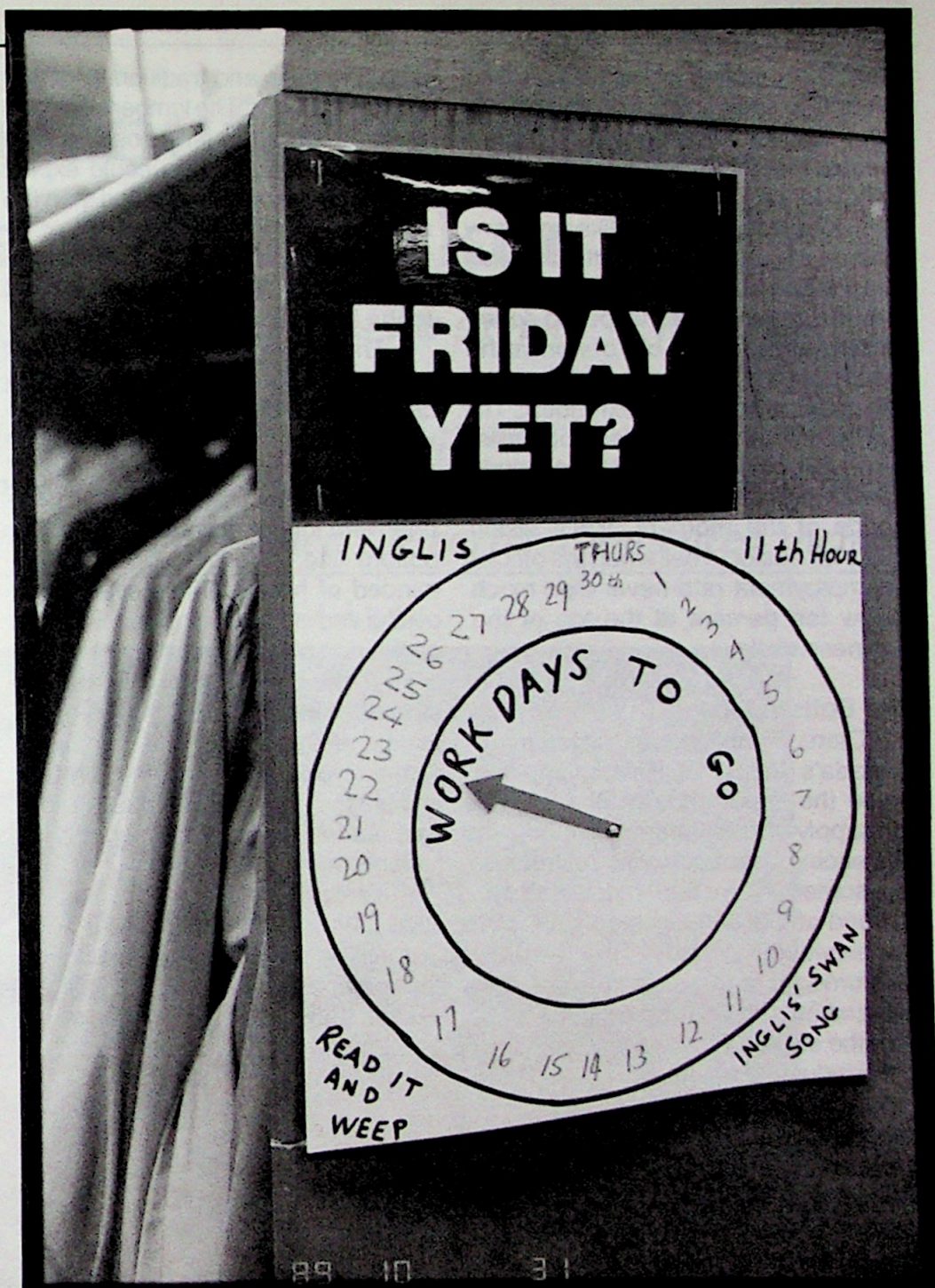
The word "flexibility" is very much like the word "progress." It can mean a lot of different things to a lot of different

people. Both words sound positive. Progress is almost always assumed to be good. Similarly, flexible people and organizations are surely to be envied. After all, the opposites sound unattractive: Rigid, sclerotic, unbending. But it all depends on whether we are dealing with the view from below or the view from above.

We're told that flexibility is part of the demands of a Second Industrial Revolution. As the First Industrial Revolution took shape 200 years ago, voices from below questioned progress. They questioned how their lives were being reshaped, their worlds turned upside down. The Luddites of early nineteenth century England have never enjoyed a good reputation: mindless machine smashers who tried, stubbornly, pathetically, and ultimately hopelessly, to stand in the way of progress. Empowered by new machines, capitalism was destroying the skills, jobs and working lives of hand-loom weavers and other craft workers, replacing them with the sweated labour of factory women and children.

Those who resisted, often by destroying machines, were doing the only thing they could to try to stop the apparently irresistible force. Meeting to form unions would result in transportation to Australian penal colonies - or worse - Luddism often ended on the scaffold. Yet David Ricardo, one of capitalism's earliest theoreticians, declared simply that opposition to the new machinery was "conformable to the correct principles of political economy."

The late English historian E.P. Thompson once wrote that the changes in attitude brought on by the Industrial Revolution were in fact shifts in "moral machinery" - the way people saw and understood the world. Much of what passes for training these days involves convincing people that something called flexibility is the wave of the future. Some have called this cultural training, persuading people that if they want to avoid slipping into the low-wage, temporary and part-time jobs in the growing ranks of service sector workers, they'd better rethink their expectations. I call this kind of training Attitude Adjustment.



Though the story of this working class community has an unhappy ending, humour was present throughout.

photo: David Smiley

I recently found myself on the mailing list of an outfit called Career-Track. It offers a 40-page catalogue of off-the-shelf audio and video training aides that reflect today's training emphasis on social skills. They have titles like *Self-Discipline and Emotional Control: How to Stay Calm and Productive under Pressure*. Another one is called *Interpersonal Communication Skills: Training to Minimize Conflict and Build Collaboration in Today's Team-oriented Workplace*.

If unionized manufacturing work-

ers like Pat Kopita represent a shrinking core of a divided job market, the flexiworkers of the new service class are multiplying. Many training programmes of the 1990s are designed to equip people with the attitudes and aptitudes to fit in as part of this stratum. It is here that employment contracts are individualized, where small business dominates and unions are weak or non-existent, where many women work. As large private and public sector employers move to contracting out, more people find them-

selves competing for work as contract cleaners, security guards and clerical workers. It's important to convince people that this is somehow the Natural Order of Things.

Jobs scatter about like so many shards of glass from a bottle that has crashed on a cement floor. This kind of fragmentation forces labour to scurry around after the little bits of work at the bottom of the labour market. Indeed, the metaphor can be extended. Today's dominant vision sees workers as so many bottles that need to be topped up with this skill or that according to the needs of the moment. It's a vision that's far easier to sell when the official unemployment rate never dips much below ten percent at the top of the business cycle.

The Bottom Line

Clare Pentland, an historian of Canada's Industrial Revolution, has noted the importance of changes in the supply of and demand for labour in influencing how economic restructuring - something we hear much about at the end of this century - took place in the nineteenth century. The changes also brought "a transformation of values and attitudes." Analyzing the shift from the staples economy to the industrial economy that characterized central Canada's industrial transformation, Pentland describes the independent loggers who had not yet been subjected to the discipline of the clock - to say nothing of the computer that measures time in nanoseconds.

The loggers were "efficient, not from a devotion to a religion of capitalism but as a matter of personal pride. They resisted retrogression, but they did not know that man must progress. Their choice of occupation was determined primarily by local custom." They also worked for bosses who "understood the pre-industrial values of fellow-

ship, prowess and tradition." According to Pentland: "The lumber boss who could break a log jam, knock a man down and lead a song could expect more enthusiastic production than the flabby competitor whose range of interest was from cover to cover of the account book. But the future belonged to the latter."

The movement to a culture of compliance - the tick of the clock or the clang of the factory bell - was bound up with changes in both the *expectations* of working people and the hierarchy of control over their work. Today's euphemism for the account book is "the bottom line." We are constantly reminded of how it drives every cost-cutting and staff-reducing decision. Just as the rise of the production manager who worked in an office far from the forest frontier signalled "the transformation of Canadians," the rise of the global corporation that deploys robots and shifts its capital with the speed of light is also having its effects on the nation's citizens.

For legions of Canadians, experience has taught them about what German writer Hans Magnus Enzensberger describes as "that little difference between first class and steer-

age, between the bridge and the engine room." That "little difference" makes all the difference in the world.

One business page pundit, an apparent expert on improving labour-management dialogue, explained that the Hi-Commitment team scheme at Inglis "dramatically altered work relationships...between employees and the boss."

A few months later Pat Kopita and the other workers at Inglis learned that the boss had decided to terminate that relationship. Whirlpool closed its Cambridge plant as part of a world-wide restructuring that eliminated 3,200 jobs.

Jamie Swift is a writer and broadcaster living in Kingston, Ontario. This article is adapted from his book Wheel of Fortune: Work and Life in the Age of Falling Expectations, published this spring by Between The Lines.

The photos used for this article were originally published in Working at Inglis: The Life and Death of a Canadian Factory by David Sobel and Susan Meurer. The book was published by James Lorimer & Company in 1994. The book sells for \$24.95.

Wheel of Fortune

Work and Life in the Age of Falling Expectations

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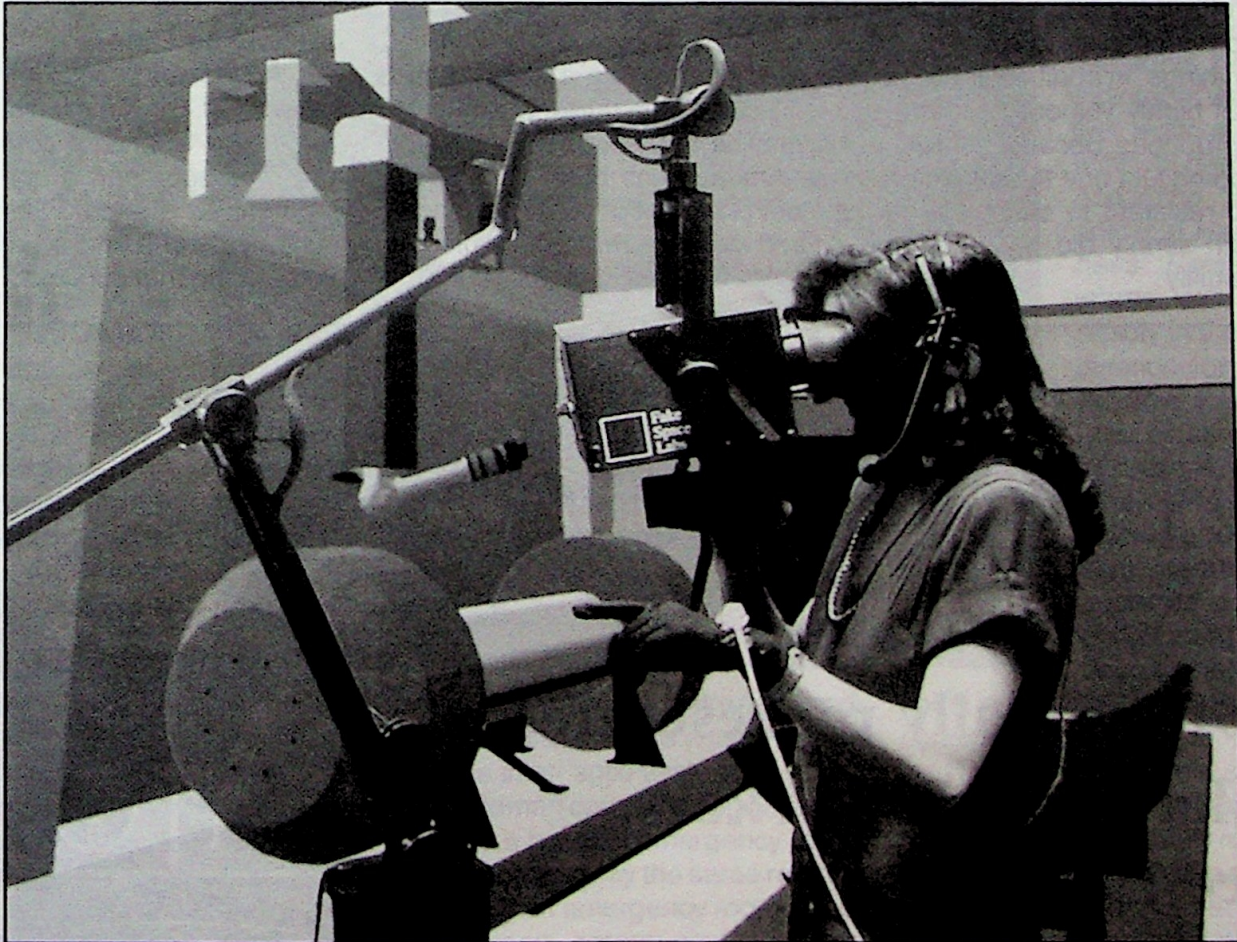
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Agile Manufacturing & the Autoworker

Agile manufacturing has been hailed as the saviour of American industry, capable of assuring it of global supremacy. But as more workplaces begin to adopt the agile system of production, hundreds of thousands of workers will lose their present full-time jobs, forcing them to be on-call and put to work only when the corporations need them.

by Bruce Allen



Three systems of manufacturing have been used to date in the auto industry. The first was the craft system which was relatively simple and straightforward. It made to order one single, unique, and extremely expensive vehicle.

The craft system was replaced

early in this century by Henry Ford's mass production system. Mass production made cheaper vehicles that were affordable for a lot more people. But mass production involved assembly lines, a minute division of labour in which each worker performed an unvaried operation without needless

motion. Performing a job became a relatively simple, repetitive and tedious exercise requiring little or no thought. Management did the thinking and made the decisions, and workers did the work.

The third system was the lean system which first emerged in the 1950s

and was widely applied in the early 1980s. It gradually transformed the mass production system through cost-cutting measures such as defect reduction, outsourcing (contracting out activities normally done in-house), slashing inventories and increasing work-force productivity. It relentlessly searched for ways to squeeze more work from fewer workers. Auto executives in particular became convinced that the lean system was the best approach ever devised to optimize the utilization of plant capacity and labour.

Yet, like the mass production system, the lean system remained limited by its focus on short, fixed term production cycles. The lean system did not, and could not, enable an employer to quickly adapt or change over the production process to produce other things. In addition, the lean system was highly vulnerable to production disruptions because its efficiency at doing just one thing made it fragile and resistant to change. The lean system simply did not give an operation agility.

Now a fourth system is emerging: agile manufacturing.

Agile manufacturing builds on the streamlined work process of lean manufacturing, but unlike the lean system, an agile manufacturing system is able to shift course rapidly. It focuses across production cycles rather than within them. This allows a factory to be reconfigured for an unplanned production requirement, or to rapidly build customized products. The agile system allows an organization to thrive in an environment of constant and unpredictable change by responding quickly to competitive threats and market opportunities. Implementing an agile system therefore means a sharp acceleration of the restructuring process at the plant level.

Corporate America's Agile Agenda

The concept of agile manufacturing may be very new to us. But Corporate America has been encouraging the development of agile manufacturing and working towards its implementation for the past decade. In fact, the

U.S. Department of Defense contributed \$5 million to the Agility Forum, the organization that is at the forefront of promoting the implementation of the agile system.

The U.S. government, Fortune 500 companies and the American Big Three automakers all support the agile manufacturing vision. Dr. Steven Goldman of the Agility Forum believes the system promises "a new means of organizing technical, human, social and natural resources into what is likely to become the dominant world industrial order of the 21st Century." By implementing the agile system, American corporations hope to assure the U.S. of a position of global supremacy in industrial manufacturing.

Vision and Labour

Advocates of agile manufacturing such as Dr. Goldman envision a workforce that "shares a common vision with management, a common commitment to shared values for joint success, and a shared responsibility for creating that success." This vision

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would have us believe that we and our bosses are on the same side in a global fight for economic survival that pits us against other workers and their bosses.

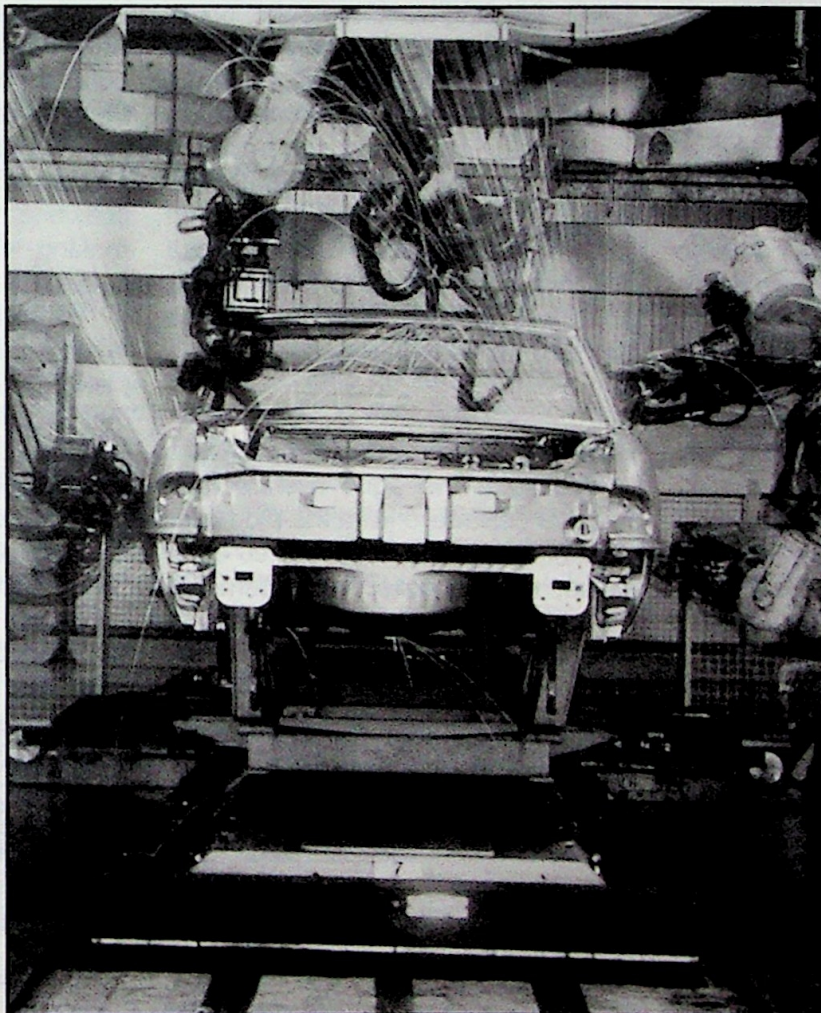
Agile manufacturing rejects the slow, hierarchical decision-making chains of mass production. Agility guru Rick Dove says because "continuous and unpredictable change requires frequent and accurate decisions," knowledgeable, highly trained and empowered workers who can make quick decisions will be required for an organization to be flexible, rapid and responsive to change. Lowering the point of decision-making depends on a work-force committed to the corporation's goals. Yet, as with the lean system, the power of defining these goals and allocating the monies necessary to meet them belong at the top of the corporate structure. Empowerment is only meant to go so far.

Virtual Enterprises

The agile system is holistic. According to an article in *Automotive Industries* magazine, the system applies to "production design concepts, business relationships and corporate strategies, in addition to all the elements of the production chain." Every structure within a corporation or enterprise must be agile in order for it to be a genuinely agile organization. With respect to business relationships in the auto industry, for example, this means it will generate infinitely more business partnerships or strategic alliances between corporations than ever before.

A central agile system concept is the virtual enterprise. These are fluid bodies made up of partnerships which "form quickly and operate effectively even when distributed among many physical locations." They share data

and resources in order to achieve specific goals, then dissolve once the alliance is no longer useful. Virtual enterprises will enable different corporations to make use of each others' specific strengths on an "as needed" basis. In other words, they will enable auto plants and other corporate facilities to rapidly restructure and reconfig-



ure their operations to make new products. This makes mass customization possible in an agile system.

Goldman compares virtual enterprises to a hospital emergency room. The customers play the same roles as patients in an emergency room where "on demand, emergency room personnel must form themselves into teams in response to the needs of the individual." In industry, corporations that employ the concept of virtual enterprise will form strategic alliances and tap into resources on an international scale to serve their customers with a rapid and customized response.

Virtual enterprises have only become possible due to advances in

computer networking and high speed communications. Players need only to be "plug compatible" to achieve the tremendous agility of virtual enterprises on an as needed basis.

Instant Teams

The structure and composition of an agile work-force is particularly disturbing from a labour point of view. Despite claims that workers will be "primary assets" of an agile enterprise, the agile vision ominously calls for a "virtual work-force" with a very fluid structure capable of readily adapting to continuous change.

In an agile system, managers become coordinators who will form their workers into teams within an overall network. According to a 1993 article in *Harvard Business Review*, these teams can "integrate rapidly in the best combination or sequence required to tailor products or services." The individuals who participate in these dynamic networks and form "instant teams" will be expected to work together immediately. Job descriptions will "be-

come increasingly broad and may even disappear."

The agile system is supposed to create "customer focused organizations." What this actually means is that the work-force of an agile organization is at the mercy of market forces, and labour becomes completely subordinated to capital.

A Two-Tiered Work-Force

A truly agile work-force has two tiers: a core of broadly skilled, highly trained and relatively secure permanent workers and a large and fluid body of temporary workers. These temporary workers will only be able to obtain work with an enterprise on an

"as needed" basis.

Agile system guru Rick Dove says temporary workers will augment the core of permanent workers to "absorb fluctuating staff requirements and to provide specialty skills." These specialty skills must be available to the organization on demand in essentially the same way that a hospital emergency room depends on getting whatever resources it requires almost immediately. The resulting mix of temporary and permanent workers will facilitate the easy reconfiguration of instant teams "with skill sets matched to tasks."

These temporary workers will also serve as a convenient pool from which new permanent workers will be recruited. Once they are permanently hired on, they will be given the limited job security denied to those still in the temporary work-force. Only then will an employer invest in training or skill broadening for these newly permanent workers, and only then will an employer cease to arbitrarily take advantage of these workers on an "as needed" basis.

This concept of a virtual work-

force is a prescription for outsourcing on a huge scale. This will be especially true in an industry like auto where increased outsourcing has gone hand in hand with the implementation of lean manufacturing, and where global sourcing from a single supplier is now a common practice. Indeed, the agile system threatens to make the very idea of keeping work "in-house" obsolete, and this will severely limit the need for permanent workers. Virtual enterprises will be instrumental in making this happen precisely because they will dissolve once the goals they were designed to meet have been achieved; the temporary workers whose skills were employed to attain these goals will become redundant unless they are immediately needed somewhere else.

The Agile System and Autoworkers

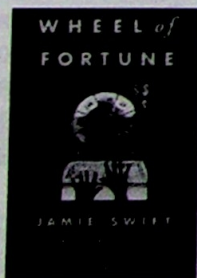
Because the agile system is a decisive departure from the old mass production system, it cannot co-exist with the types of collective agreements that have been in place since the North American auto industry was first organized by the United Auto Workers.

Simply stated, these agreements were tailored to the use of the mass production system. For example, entire sections of the agreements implicitly recognize an adversarial relationship between management and labour. But adversarial relationships, as noted earlier, cannot exist in an agile enterprise.

These collective agreements are likewise incompatible with the whole concept of empowerment. Because they are tailored to the system of hierarchical decision-making of the mass production system, they are not conducive to point-of-knowledge decision-making which is essential in a truly agile system.

Traditional collective agreements in the auto industry also contain complex seniority structures and numerous job classifications. These are obvious obstacles to instant teams and virtual enterprises. There are also no provisions in these agreements to facilitate the use of "as needed" temporary workers and there are obstacles to prevent contracting out. Each decision to outsource would result in a disruptive and costly movement of

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employees within the permanent workforce as the affected workers exercise their seniority rights and displace lower seniority workers. Mass production auto plants are relatively compatible with the exercise of seniority rights because each job is fairly simple and requires little training. This is not true in an agile system. An employer would quickly find that all of the resources invested in developing an employee's capabilities would be wasted in the event that he or she is permanently displaced in a very different job requiring new training, while the person who has taken their job will also have to be re-trained.

According to Bruce Roberts, a researcher with the Canadian Auto Workers, another effect of agile manufacturing in the auto industry will be to shift product design and development work traditionally done by various skilled trades into engineering offices. Roberts says plug compatibility will also make "many of the trades redundant by absorbing their skills and experiences into computer software."

In short, virtual enterprises will confer a decisive competitive advan-

tage because they enable a corporation to significantly cut the costs associated with developing new products, especially in terms of dedicated investment. Agile manufacturing is therefore completely synonymous with corporate efforts to downsize in the auto industry. The basic incompatibility of traditional collective agreements and the agile system in the auto industry is based largely upon the obstacles these agreements place in the way of downsizing and slashing "waste."

The Future

The agile system is extremely threatening for autoworkers because corporations like GM force plants to directly compete against each other for work. This practice of "whipsawing" sucks workers in different plants into defacto bidding wars against each other. In these bidding wars, the plants that come up with what auto executives term "competitive agreements" by making the most concessions stand the best chance of either retaining existing work or acquiring new work and staying open.

Agile manufacturing will simply

intensify whipsawing and force autoworkers into a race to the bottom where they will eventually find themselves earning 19th Century wages and enduring 19th Century working conditions while using 21st Century technology.

The challenge which lies before the working class is to fully understand the implications of the agile system and its related practices, and to develop a holistic, multi-faceted strategy to deal with them effectively. Labour must succeed in rising to this historic challenge, and it must do so in the very near future. Otherwise, unionism in industries like auto and the labour movement as we know it will be decimated by relentless economic restructuring. Furthermore, if this challenge is not successfully met, a new generation of labour leaders and activists will find themselves confronted with the monumental task of building an entirely new labour movement amidst the ashes of the old.

Bruce Allen is a Shop Committeeperson and member of CAW Local 199. He is currently writing a book on Agile Manufacturing.

It's okay to shop at the Bay.

THANKS to a public campaign to draw attention to the issues of dignity and respect, the strike that began at the Bay in Kamloops last September is over.

The provincial mediator involved in the dispute ordered the store to re-open and the strike, by members of the United Steelworkers Local 898, to end, following the Bay employees' 97-per-cent acceptance of earlier recommendations.

Those recommendations, which include contract language to protect employees against sexual or racial harassment, were being considered as part of the Steelworkers' application for a first collective agreement under Section 55 of the B.C. Labour Code.

"Our thanks to everyone who supported us," says Local 898 President Beth Shymko. "It's time all retail bosses realize that their workers are not second-class employees, and that they deserve a voice in the workplace which is based on true dignity and respect."



United Steelworkers Local 898
KAMLOOPS' BAY EMPLOYEES

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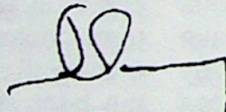
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The Information Highway and the New Economy

Many people being urged to plug in, hook up and log on might find that the on-ramp for the Information Highway leads to a dead-end of boring, routine work in a permanently part-time work-force.

by Heather Menzies

The Information Highway entered the public eye as a giant consumer dream machine - a digital expressway to the 500-channel universe and a teleshopping mall. In fact, the biggest lane might well turn out to be the bus lane, filled not with people but with machine-readable data: software programming robots at multi-product assembly plants, remotely processing test results in labs, dispatching production orders for customized jeans or pizza, or managing accounts and inventory in stores, banks and insurance companies, hospitals and so on.

While the technological haves in the globalized new economy might get to ride the fast lane, schmoozing for contacts (and contracts) around the world of electronic networks, many others might be stuck in silicon pit stops along the way - working in call centres and other digital work sites. Still others might be stuck at home as computer-controlled teleworkers or

button-pushing couch potatoes, the 500-channel dream dissolving into a re-run of the 'Roman bread and circuses' - mass entertainment in the Roman Empire - more than anything else.

Many people being urged to plug in, hook up and log on might find that the on-ramp for the Information Highway leads to a dead-end of boring, routine work in a permanently part-time contingent work-force, where the work comes to them; they don't go to it.

The truth about the Information Highway is that from the beginning it was primarily conceived for business and the corporate economy, not for culture and the community. The key convergence in the converging technologies is computers (brains) and communications (connections). Computer graphics, multi-media etc. are important, but they're merely icing on the new economy.

When U.S. vice-president Al Gore coined the highway metaphor (actually, he recycled it from his grandfather who as a U.S. legislator championed an asphalt superhighway system in the 1950s), he was completing a dream he'd pushed since the late 1980s. This was to use superfast computers and networks as a key to renewed American business competitiveness which would, he was quoted in *Business Week* as saying, "enable this country to leapfrog the Japanese."

The Canadian government's first public report on the Information Highway, released by Industry Canada in January 1994, described it first in terms of the corporate economy.

"The widespread use of communications and information technologies has already transformed banking and financial services...The Information Highway will play a similar but even greater enabling and transforming role across the Canadian economy as a

whole...The key to competitiveness will be the ability of firms to develop, acquire and adapt new and state-of-the-art information and communications technologies, products and services - the tools that will be available on and through the information highway system."

For the corporate economy, the highway represents the final networking phase of a technological restructuring process dating back to the early 1970s and the invention of the microchip.

With the microchip, computerization swept through every workplace in every line of work. But it didn't just automate what was being done manually and mechanically. With the chip built into communications devices too, automated machines could be integrated into sub-systems and these plugged into larger systems. The process grew exponentially through the 1980s, with every advance in software, in switching technology and in chips' processing and memory capacity. And everywhere the pattern was the same: larger and larger-scale integration of production and service-support systems, under the all-seeing gaze of management information systems. The communications component became more and more important, simultaneously refining both centralized management and coordi-

nation, and the decentralized dispatch and distribution of work. In the late '80s, it grew through private, corporate networks and networking systems, and through generic versions of these sold by a variety of companies in and outside of the information-technology business. In the 1990s, however, the perspective has shifted, from networks as part of management information systems to, increasingly, networks as a generic infrastructure for the new economy.

The Information Highway is the name of this new generic infrastructure, and it's both lifting the corporate economy off its old industrial foundations and launching it into cyberspace.

The networks of the Information Highway are becoming the place where people go to work, to take care of business, and also to do business (as well as, increasingly, to learn, to watch a show and even, sometimes, to enter a "virtual" relationship.) They're becoming the context in which business deals are made and new "virtual" corporations come into existence through the sharing of software, data files etc. They're also the new medium through which work is sent and received, downloaded and uploaded, dispatched and distributed to a global and local work-force.

The key to what this means lies in the fact that so much work has been

computerized to the point that it can be entirely defined and controlled by the computer and the management-information systems running behind it. It also lies in the way the work was computerized - to leave people in control of the computer and free to work it as a tool, or to have people entirely controlled by the computer and free to do only what the computer designates is to be done. In the overwhelming majority of cases which have been researched and reported on from the 1980s, the choice has followed a very clear pattern. While some people (a significant minority) have gained considerable more scope and power in their work, many others (over half, if not closer to two-thirds) have seen the work simplified as computerization has reduced them to operating largely as extensions of information systems and their software. (Significantly, women are being re-concentrated in the latter group.) This sets the stage for a class-divided society in the new economy, defined by gender and generation under the seemingly neutral guise of people's relationship to technology: whether they do computer-assisted work and control the operating system; or whether they do computer-defined work and are controlled by it. The first group, what could be the new working rich, will be able to telecommute. They'll control where, and when, they go to

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work. The second group, what could be the new working poor, will be teleworkers; the work will come to them.

The polarizing pattern from the '80s also explains the hollowing out of work to create the current "two-tier" labour market: a core of well-paid executive, professional and technical people who work full-time (though often with bruisingly long hours) and to the full extent of their skill, knowledge and abilities; and a periphery of people employed on a part-time, temporary, contract basis - often with their skill, knowledge and abilities only minimally tapped and engaged. (Significantly, women are being re-ghettoized in this secondary, peripheral labour force, along with both men and women under the age of 35.)

It's when work has been simplified to the point where the computer system does all the decision making and coordination that work turns into "McJobs," and the people doing it become "costlessly replaceable." The case studies of the 1980s show a clear connection between computerization and the wholesale replacement of full-time staff with part-time contingent workers - everywhere from nurses in hospitals to assembly workers in manufacturing to clerical and administrative-support workers in offices and stores.

Through this approach to comput-

erization - where machine relationships are chosen to replace human relationships and machine intelligence chosen to replace human intelligence - the production of goods and the giving of service are being reduced to one monocultural standard. Furthermore, this commonizing, standardizing approach is being applied everywhere, be it making a hamburger, drafting a loan or life insurance, or even caring for the sick and the elderly in a hospital, with this one best way merely mitigated by multiple-choice options built into the software and other operating procedures. It makes no sense from the point of view of human community and culture, nor even from the perspective of social justice. But on a productivity and competitiveness chart, it makes excellent sense. Especially since, once the work is fully absorbed into the standardized algorithms of computer systems, it becomes highly transportable. It can be relocated anywhere in the city or around the world, wherever there's an on-ramp to the shiny new network of networks: the Information Highway.

That's the promise of the new global economy, and why it's referred to as a new paradigm. Through it, globe-trotting companies can work the networks to leverage global economies of scale, plus global disparities in wages, and in human and environ-

mental rights. The McJobs of the late 1980s could become the telework of the late 1990s, either at call centres or in people's homes. In call centres, such as New Brunswick's famous few, or Ontario's less famous thousands, companies in the information services (banks, insurance companies, couriers) and even in manufacturing, employ clerical workers to work at the receiving end of 1-800 numbers to process customer orders, and product/service-support requests, using a keyboard plugged into relevant files in the company's management information system.

Much the same computer-defined and computer-controlled work can also be done at home. At a 1994 conference on telework and the Information Highway, New Brunswick's deputy minister for the Information Highway, Jerri Fowler extolled the "empowering" possibilities of telework creating "opportunities for self-employment" at home.

Empowering?

In real life, Carol Van Helvoort who processes orders for Pizza Pizza off a computer hooked into a modem in her one-bedroom apartment on the outskirts of Toronto, finds it's the opposite.

"It's boring. It's totally isolated. There's no communication with other

RICK A. ENGEL, Labour Lawyer

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workers, no comraderie." On a split shift, during which the family phone is effectively occupied by her employer and the central computer monitors everything she does, she repeats the same standard phrases, keys in the same standard information, dispatching orders at a rate of nearly one a minute. Being unionized (she's a member of the United Food and Commercial Workers), the company pays for the equipment. But where others are employed through un-unionized temp. agencies, rent for the computer and modem is deducted from their pay.

Being the union steward too, Carol gets out a little.

Still, she told me in a telephone interview "you stagnate. You lose a lot in conversation. As far as doing your housework, forget it! I used to curl my hair every day. Now, forget it! I don't bother to do my nails. You lose the momentum to do things. You don't even bother getting dressed half the time.

"And you smoke more. It's the boredom. You can't move!"

She'd quit tomorrow, she said. "But there's nothing out there."

The potential scope for this privatization of work into people's bedrooms and kitchens - plus basements and garages and even cars and trucks - is huge. It's evident in the amount of work which has already been computerized to the point where computer

systems almost entirely define, and control the work to be done. It's also suggested in the de-institutionalization of work into part-time, contract, contingent work already. It's suggested too in the rising numbers of people outfitting their homes and cars as a place of work, using the Rogers CableLink Work system, or Northern Telecom's "Perfect Office" home-office software.

The 1991 census reported a 40 percent increase, since 1981, in the number of people working "at home," compared to a 16 percent growth in the labour force as a whole. From city to city, province to province, the statistics also showed that this new home-based labour force is clustered heavily in administration and management, clerical, sales and service work. The majority in the clerical, sales and services categories were women. Overwhelmingly too, their incomes were less than \$20,000 a year - with a sizeable proportion of them earning less than \$10,000.

That's not a living. It's pin money. An allowance.

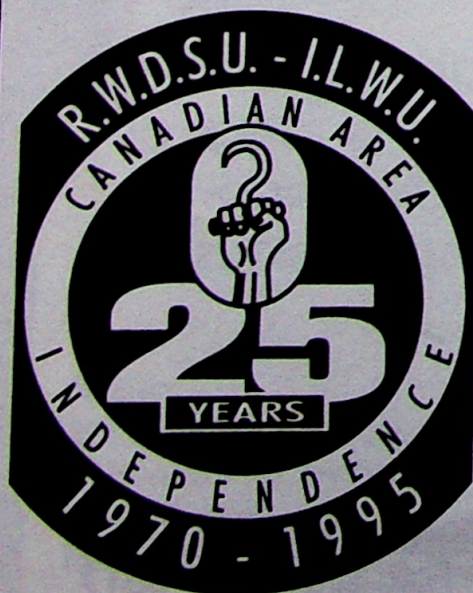
Yet this is all part of what's happening. It's all just part of the "new reality." It's all described so deterministically that it's hard to get worked up about it. The corporate agenda has so occupied the horizons of public perception, with its seemingly objective language of adjusting to globalization that it's hard to remember that this is all

the result of human choice, and that in fact there is something we can do about it. If we can rouse ourselves to action. However, phrases like "as the economy restructures," which I read in a report on rising rates of youth poverty, leave us bloodless on the page: mute and capable of only feeble, knee-jerk protests on the way to the latest adjustment measures in "human-resources skills development" and community workfare.

Eco-feminist Vandana Shiva called for "an insurrection of subjugated knowledge" to resist the monoculture of high-tech. crops and related high-tech. knowledge associated with the so-called Green Revolution of hybrid crops. Applied here, we need an insurrection of personal knowledge to resist the monoculture of the globalizing computer revolution with its machine logic of competitiveness and productivity; faster, cheaper equals better.

Better from a human point of view means a chance to be meaningfully employed and involved in your economy. It means a chance for meaningful involvement in the community of co-workers and customers in actual communities, not being restructured out of those communities into the simulated, computer-defined and controlled environment of "virtual" communities and workplaces.

We need to tell it like it is for us, plainly in our own terms. We need to put human experience at the centre of



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a new critical discourse on restructuring. We need to fill our ears, our minds and our hearts with the stories of what's actually happening to people in the here and now, and be moved to take action as well as inspired to do the necessary work of analysis and strategizing.

We don't need a grand plan for how we would restructure the economy differently. Only a resolve to put the needs of people, and the social and natural environment first. The rest requires mostly what Ursula Franklin calls strategies for "coping."

We need to ensure that part-time workers are entitled to the same minimum benefits, such as unemployment insurance and maternity leave, as full-time workers. We also need to establish minimum and maximum standards for working hours - to ensure that people get a chance to work a minimum, and to reverse current trends toward permanent overtime (50 hours a week and more) for certain full-time workers - usually men in management, sales and manufacturing, though also women in the social and natural sciences.

And we need to build on the work which went into the 1965 Samuel Freedman inquiry on technological restructuring, which concluded that restructuring should not be an exclusive managerial prerogative. It should be negotiated. This means we need to dust off all those technological-change clauses negotiated into union contracts in the '70s and '80s, and act

on them.

There's more to the reality than the corporate bottom line and managerial prerogatives. There's the bottom line of full and meaningful employment, and of equity and social justice, and it's the prerogative of all of us to pursue these goals, together, now.

The material for this article is drawn

from Heather's new book, Whose Brave New World? The Information Highway and the New Economy, to be published in early 1996, by Between the Lines Press. Heather Menzies is the author of four other books on technology and the social environment, including Fastforward & Out of Control.

There's never just one way to do something. No matter what it is, there's always an alternative.

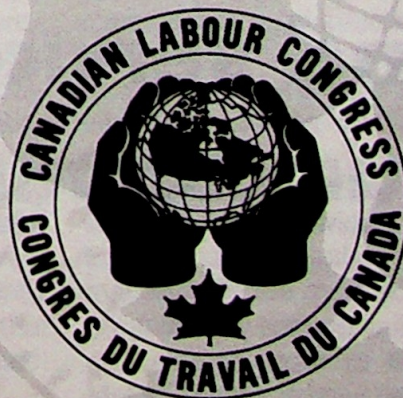
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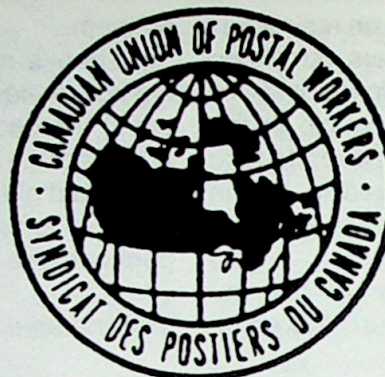
IT PAYS TO BELONG TO A UNION!

Richmond, Quebec postal clerk Normand Ruel is back to work after eight years fighting an unjust dismissal. Says Ruel: "I never lost hope." Through the arbitration system, through the Quebec Superior Court and finally a decision from the Quebec Court of Appeal which returned him to work on May 1, 1995 (appropriately International Workers Day).

Negotiating eight years compensation and interest for lost wages is under way.



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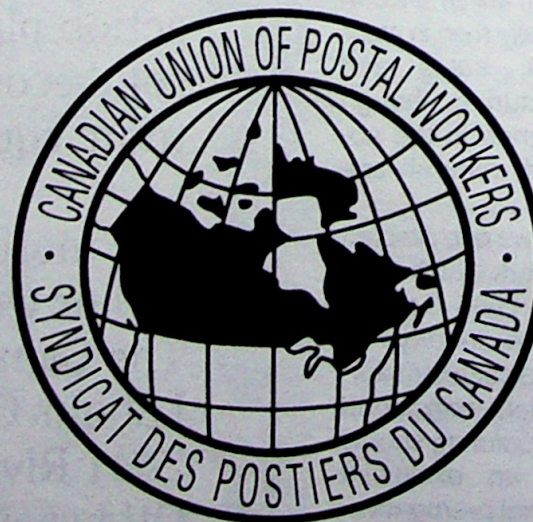
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- a public service of mail delivery for Saskatoonians and all Canadians
- and win better benefits and working conditions that not only benefit postal workers but ultimately society at large

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The New Democracy in Canada

Governments today are more concerned about the reaction of bond-rating agencies to their fiscal and policy decisions, than about the reaction of Canadian citizens.

by Basil "Buzz" Hargrove

Most governments in Canada, of all political stripes, seem to do roughly the same thing once they are elected - slash and burn public programs - regardless of what they promised during the election campaign, and regardless of what the voters want. The huge contrast between the Red Book election program of the federal Liberal Party, and the policies which the Liberal government has introduced since taking power, is the most glaring example of this phenomenon, but it is hardly unique.

This is not to imply that all governments are the same, nor that all political parties are the same. Clearly, there are important differences between the policies that have been enacted by various governments, and thus elections, to some extent, still matter.

But the overall direction of public policy in Canada is clearly being imposed on governments from outside of the electoral process. Our public sector is being massively undermined and eroded. It is being forcibly downsized into line with the new fiscal realities implied by a grim macroeconomic regime of high interest rates and quasi-permanent stagnation.

The resulting cutbacks agenda is being enforced by interests that are far more powerful than the mere electorate, and who can impose sanctions for bad behaviour far swifter and more certain than simply losing some ground in a public opinion poll or even an election. Governments today are more concerned about the reaction of bond-rating agencies to their fiscal and policy decisions, than about the reaction

of Canadian citizens.

The electoral process, and Canadian democracy, is therefore becoming increasingly incidental to the business of government - and to government's central task of the 1990s, namely overseeing and facilitating its own radical downsizing.

We seem, in short, to have a new democracy in Canada. Powerful financial interests, not Canadian voters, decide what governments do. The new democracy is limited, at best, to a process of sham consultation.

"Nice" governments will give Canadians the opportunity to air their views on *where* and *how* public programs should be cut - not on whether or not there are other ways of solving our fiscal crisis. Less "nice" governments, on the other hand, will "just do it": like a fiscally conservative Nike commercial.

The dominant factors driving our political economy in the 1990s - the level of real interest rates, the monetary stance of central banks, the functioning of globalized financial markets - these issues are not open for discussion in the new democracy. The prior assumption is that there is nothing that can be done about these problems by governments. More fundamentally, what is being challenged is the very notion that human beings can jointly decide on and implement policies that they believe will promote their collective interest.

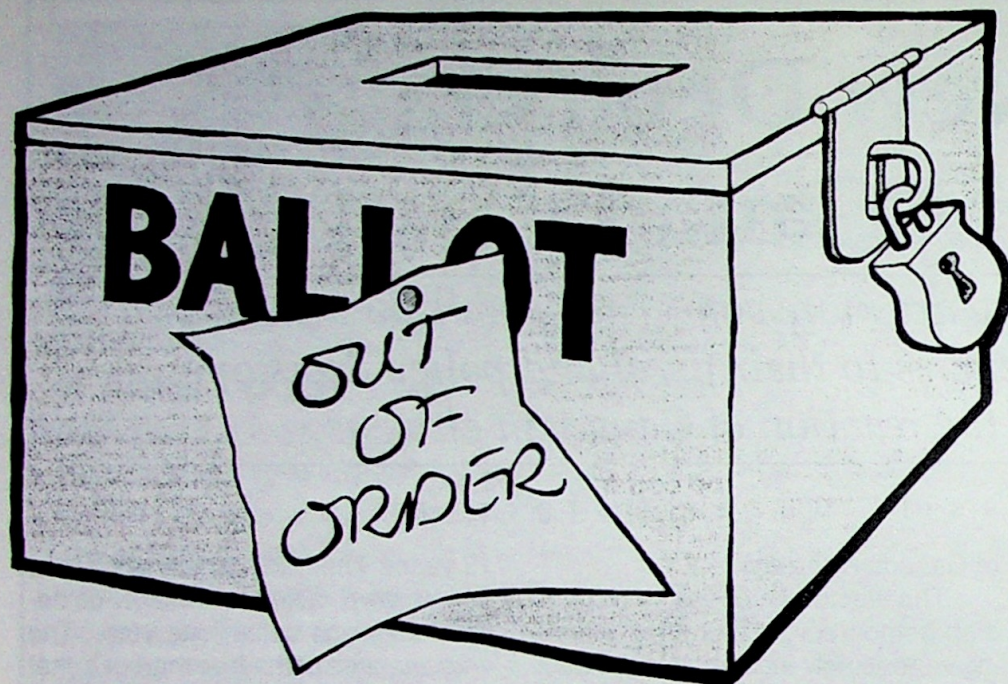
In this manner the new democracy is entirely consistent with the free market economic program which has gained so much ground over the past

15 years. The free market, of course, has its own distorted version of democracy: "one dollar, one vote." The very essence of the free market is that individuals do *not* collectively decide and act on things. Rather, individuals were put on this earth to pursue their own personal interests, and *only* their personal interests - respecting, of course, the constraint imposed by the amount of money they happen to have in their wallet.

Indeed, free market purists view any type of collective action as anathema to the efficiency - and the "democracy" - of self-interested market behaviour. That is why they discourage, or even try to prohibit, collective actions such as the activity of trade unions, consumer boycotts or the collection and expenditure of taxes by governments (except for very narrow market-enhancing functions such as law enforcement).

The greater is the ascribed realm of privatized, market activity, the narrower is the realm afforded for collective action by citizens. Hence democracy itself - of the one person, one vote variety - becomes weaker and more constrained.

In recent years, unfortunately, this view has gained widespread acceptance: that not only is the private marketplace the most *efficient* way to organize our economy, it is in fact the *only* way to organize our economy. Many Canadians have been convinced that there is simply no alternative to deregulated, privatized, profit-maximizing behaviour - be it in international trade, money and banking, job-crea-



tion, and now even the provision of social services. If we don't like it, in most cases we can't resist it, so we might as well accept it.

As they have accepted the omnipresent and irresistible power of the marketplace, many Canadians have simultaneously become cynical and hateful about government. In short, they have become cynical about the very idea of doing things together. The Reform Party and the new-right Tories have tapped into this uneasiness; their "every man for himself," survivalist message has rung true with many

poor and working Canadians.

There is a nasty, mean-spirited mood in the land - a redneck revolution in the making. Instead of blaming the financiers who have profited from high interest rates and zero inflation, average Canadians are turning against each other.

Having largely given up on the hope that government can do anything to improve their own lives, many working people have turned their attention to hating anything to do with government - and against the feeble attempts of some governments to ensure that

what remains of the "affluent society" is at least shared a bit more fairly amongst us all.

In these fiscally constrained times, every public program or activity, no matter how small, becomes fair game for the harshest scrutiny imaginable. Politicians, the media, and people on streetcorners fall over one another to criticize pensions paid to elected officials (why shouldn't elected officials receive decent pensions?). Meanwhile, greed and inefficiency of an infinitely higher order of magnitude goes unquestioned in the private sector: \$2 million salaries for CEOs, million dollar pensions, private jets, real estate collapses and insurance frauds.

It is as if, implicitly frustrated by the shrinking domain over which their vote actually matters, Canadians turn up the heat of their anger and cynicism against the few token issues over which they feel they still have influence. Meanwhile, the truly important decisions that affect our lives are made behind the closed doors of corporate Canada, without any pretence of public participation or scrutiny.

The overarching task of the labour and progressive movements, therefore, is to rebuild the collective will to implement the policies that we choose - despite the opposition we will face from the most powerful and entrenched elements of our society and economy.

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Barrister & Solicitor

Solidarity with our sisters and brothers who struggle for justice and dignity
at work, in life, at play.



We must convince Canadians once again that poverty and selfishness are not inevitable. We must show that we can do things *together* - not just as privatized economic maximizers. We must demonstrate that we can influence our collective destiny despite the power of competitive globalized markets.

In short, we must revitalize hope in the notion that collective action is both possible and desirable, in *all* areas of our daily lives - not just at the moment of our occasional and decreasingly relevant trips to the ballot box. The conditions we face in the workplace, in our neighbourhoods, in our public spaces are all tailored by factors over which we can, if we are organized, exert collective control. We need to show that Canadians can still work together, with the help of public and cooperative institutions, to rebuild Canada as a genuine and caring place of community.

This process will be a long-term struggle. There are a few obvious areas where we can start: issues that are

prime candidates for demonstrating that collective action and regulation are still both necessary and possible. Rules to limit working hours, for example, would help reduce unemployment and ensure that at least some of the gains of new productivity are captured in the form of more leisure time. The unregulated marketplace, however, is enforcing *longer* hours on working people; this reveals the continued necessity of social intervention.

Re-imposing some type of deliberate social control over our financial system is another arena where the principles of collective action need to be dusted off. More than any other factor, it is the operation of private financial markets, dominated by the owners of financial wealth, that have so undermined our growth and employment prospects. Yet these anonymous markets (contrary to the ideology of powerlessness which we are fed every day) are in fact *social* institutions which could indeed be successfully re-regulated.

More important than the details of

these and other particular policy debates, however, is the central theme which progressives must fight to re-establish: namely that the operation of our economy is something that society can control. The business pages talk about markets like they are independent, sentient beings ("the markets were feeling optimistic yesterday"), and we are supposed to bow down before their power. But in reality, the market economy is a social institution, and we can act together to change the way that institution works if it is no longer meeting social needs.

In short, we need a national debate on how we can build a more meaningful democracy in Canada, and how to rebuild a real sense of community. If that debate does not include how we can regulate and democratize economic power - the dominant force in our lives - then it betrays what democracy is really about.

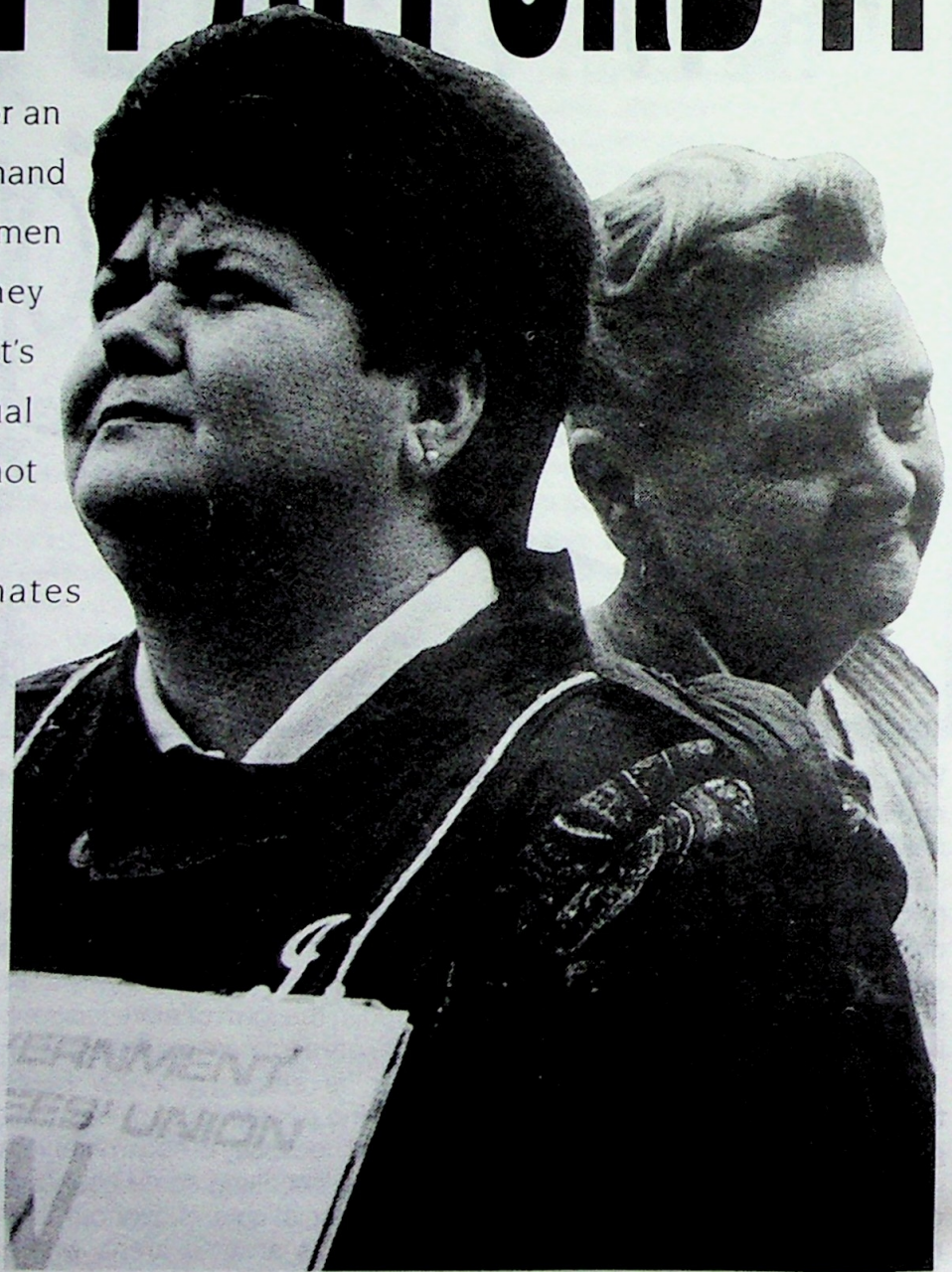
Basil "Buzz" Hargrove is President of the Canadian Auto Workers.

WE CAN'T AFFORD IT

Pay equity is just a new term for an old trade union demand: the demand for fair wages. When women and men do equally demanding jobs, they should receive the same wages. It's called equal pay for work of equal value, or pay equity. But that's not what happens.

The pay system discriminates against women. The extent of this discrimination can be measured. It's called the wage gap. Women still make about 64 cents for every dollar that men make.

Saskatchewan and Alberta are the only two provinces in Canada that have not taken steps to close the wage gap. Although the Romanow NDP promised to implement pay equity, they haven't delivered. It's simply not a priority. The government is more committed to fighting gun control legislation than wage discrimination.



SGEU and other unions are working to change this sad state of affairs. We're campaigning for pay equity because we know that working women and their families can't afford wage discrimination. **No one can!**

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Fewer Jobs, Longer Hours

There is a solution to the twin problems of staggering unemployment for some and overwork for others: the shorter workweek.

by Guy Marsden

There are approximately 35 million unemployed people in the 26 countries that make up the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). In Canada, official statistics have a million and a half citizens out of work.

The unemployment rate has steadily increased each decade, from an average of 2.7 percent in the late 1940s to an average of 9.3 percent in the 1980s. The unemployment rate would be substantially higher if discouraged workers and the one-third of part-time workers who want full-time work were included in the calculations.

Paradoxically, while the ranks of the unemployed are growing, some of the employed are actually working longer hours. Last year, the Advisory Group on Working Time and

the Distribution of Work, chaired by economist Arthur Donner, found that the percentage of those working over 40 hours per week increased during the 1976-1993 period, with those working over 50 hours increasing from 6.2 to 7.9 percent.

While some are working longer hours, the average workweek in 1993 was only 37 hours. The "standard" 40-hour workweek is being squeezed out by those jobs requiring longer hours and the growth of part-time jobs. During the 1976-93 period, the percentage of part-time jobs increased from 14 to 23 percent. Part-timers average only 15 hours of work a week.

In 1992 six of every ten Canadians worked full-time for the year. However, during the 1980s, one-half of all jobs

created were "non-standard" - part-time, temporary, contract, and self-employment. Generally speaking, these jobs are often low-paid and offer few benefits and security.

The distribution of worktime has serious ramifications for income equality. As the advisory group found, "Polarized hours of work mean polarization of opportunity and income. This is one of the chief explanations for the growing economic inequality in Canadian society. People who work long hours are more likely to have high incomes."

Donner's advisory group found that this polarization has a clear gender bias. Of those Canadians working less than 30 hours a week in 1993, over two-thirds were women. In contrast, of those Canadians working 50 hours or more, 70 percent were men.

For young people the future labour market looks grim. Despite the fact that today's young people face lower real wage expectations, constitute a smaller share of the population than the baby boomers that preceded them, and are the most highly educated generation, it is increasingly difficult for these people to find jobs.

In 1993 youth unemployment (those between the ages of 15 and 24) stood at 17.7 percent and only 40 percent worked full-time. Many young people stay in school because there is no full-time work available. In December 1993, 78 percent of those attending school - secondary and post-secondary - were also working part-time.

The social costs of unemployment are numerous - health problems, substance abuse, family breakdown,



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and big business seem
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be like for them.

*Carmello Morello, Mail Service Courier and
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child abuse and crime. Further, the tax burden on those still employed increases as the need for social programs grows.

The stress of overwork is taking its toll as well. Statistics Canada found that one in three Canadians feel "constantly under stress" and a quarter admit to being workaholics.

Given the twin problems of unemployment/underemployment and overwork, what is to be done?

The traditional solutions of job creation, such as promoting economic growth, do not work anymore. The Western industrialized countries are plagued by low-growth rates. Economic recoveries are "jobless" and corporations are downsizing despite massive profits.

The French institute l'OFCE recently examined four different job creating options: assistance to firms, assistance to households, an increase in foreign demand for French products, and a combination of reducing interest rates, devaluing the currency and cutting payroll taxes. The institute found the last option to be the most effective policy package, but it would only create 50,000 jobs, hardly making a dent in France's unemployment rate.

Increasingly, many see the problem as not one of creating more jobs, but rather of redistributing the existing jobs more equitably.

In this vein, the Donner report made 24 recommendations, including a 100-hour limit per year on paid overtime; a standard 40-hour workweek (six provinces still allow 44

Unemployed Workers Centre (UWC)

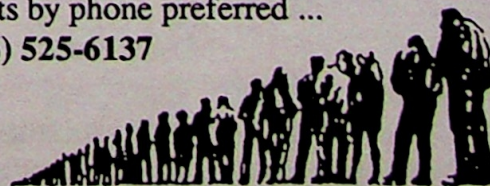
The UWC is a non-profit organization providing information and advocacy services on Unemployment Insurance.

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or 48-hour workweeks); pro-rated benefits for part-time workers; the right to five unpaid days for family leave a year; a gradual reduction of hours for workers approaching retirement; and the right to 34 weeks of unpaid parental leave for birth or adoption.

The Donner committee fell short of recommending a four-day workweek, opting instead for the encouragement of voluntary collective bargaining adjustments. Still, a background macroeconomic study found that a voluntary ten percent reduction in worktime would lower Canada's unemployment rate by four percentage points in five years.

Understating the matter, the Donner report concluded that "it is possible to reduce the unemployment rate significantly without affecting Canada's inflation rate or international competitiveness."

Redistributing Work

While voluntary arrangements like job sharing, phased retirement, permanent part-time, banked overtime and flextime can be effective methods of redistributing work more equitably, some argue that a legislated four-day workweek should be the real goal.

In his book, *Working Harder Isn't Working*, Bruce O'Hara outlines a detailed plan to implement a four-day workweek. Among other things, O'Hara's plan would involve: a 100 percent overtime tax on worktime over 32 hours per week; a 20 percent increase in the minimum wage; a one-time requirement that employers raise wages



A motherhood benefit

Motherhood has another benefit as a result of two precedent setting court decisions. Pregnant employees with benefit plans now have the right to a paid, health-related absence from work.

In case your employer hasn't told you, the courts have ruled:

- every maternity leave contains a period of time when a woman is absent from work for health-related reasons
- in a normal pregnancy this "disability period" starts when a woman begins labour and ends once she has made a full recovery
- women must be allowed to access their sick leave or short term disability benefits for this period
- the length of the health-related leave is to be determined by a woman's physician. The Alberta Medical Association has suggested for a normal pregnancy this period of time might be up to 13 weeks

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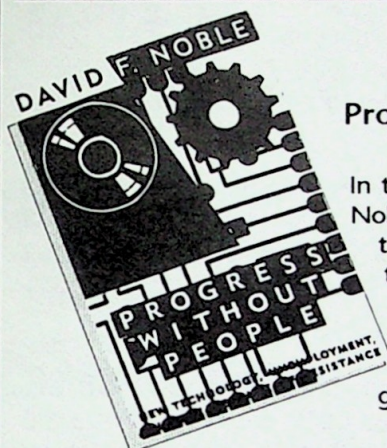
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The Latest Word on Work



Progress Without People

In Defense of Luddism

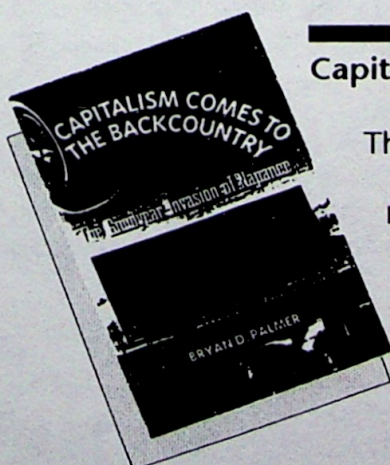
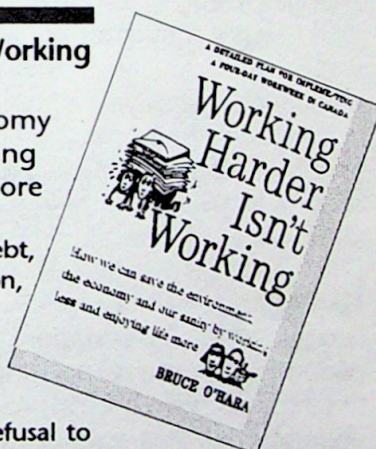
In this provocative book, David Noble argues that deference to the market and reverence for technology are leading us in the direction of deskilled work (for those who still have jobs) and a generalized global speed-up.

Paper \$15.95

Working Harder Isn't Working

How we can save the environment, the economy and our sanity by working less and enjoying life more. Massive unemployment, soaring taxes, runaway debt, environmental degradation, and growing levels of poverty and personal suffering are the direct results, Bruce O'Hara argues, of our stubborn refusal to let go of the 40-hour workweek.

Paper \$14.95



Capitalism Comes to the Backcountry

The Goodyear Invasion of Napanee

Bryan Palmer explores the human dimensions of plant relocation, sordid corporate practices, and ultimately, the corrosive cultural effects of corporate boosterism.

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by 15 percent; conversion of salaried positions to hourly wage positions; and the provision of pro-rated benefits for part-time workers.

O'Hara estimates that full-time employees would see their income decline by five percent as a result of the changes. In exchange, they would receive 52 long weekends a year. Furthermore, much of the lost income would be recouped by savings on commuting, lunches out and child care expenses.

Employers, on the other hand, would see the productivity of their work-force increase and employer contributions to unemployment insurance decline. However, employers' wage bills, including increased benefit costs for part-time workers, would rise by five percent, which O'Hara says is manageable considering that the reduction in unemployment would increase consumer demand by four percent.

Once the four-day workweek takes hold, governments would realize large savings through reduced health costs as a result of more balanced lives, reduced welfare costs, reduced crime costs, reduced education costs as the number of involuntary students decreases, and reduced capital costs for transportation, offices, and schools resulting from a move to a two-shift workplace.

In all, these cost savings would reduce government expenditures by about 20 percent. At the same time, government revenues would increase as unemployment falls drastically and wages rise.

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International Precedents

While many on the left are still attached to traditional Keynesian policies of job creation and those on the right promise "jobs, jobs, jobs" through free trade, lower taxes and zero-inflation, the idea of a shorter workweek is gaining popularity, particularly in Europe.

In 1990 German car manufacturer BMW shifted to a four-day workweek with no cut in pay. According to company officials, the new work schedule allows the plant's costly machinery to run longer so that productivity gains offset the cost of hiring more employees.

In 1993 Volkswagen and the metalworkers' union agreed to a four-day workweek in the company's six German plants as an alternative to laying off 30,000 workers, a third of the company's labour force. The reduction in the workweek was accompanied by a ten percent reduction in gross pay.

Shorter worktime has been the subject of much debate in France, Spain and Italy over the last few years. In Denmark, a paid-leave scheme was introduced in 1994 to promote job-sharing and cut unemployment.

Under Denmark's plan, every worker and unemployed person has the right to 12 months of educational, parental or sabbatical leave. The state pays the leave-taker between 70 and 100 percent of the maximum unemployment benefit. The replacement, typically an unemployed person, receives real wages and valuable work experience.

The swap costs the government nothing and reduces unemployment. The paid-leave program has proven wildly popular with Denmark's workers as applications for leave have exceeded government projections by seven times.

Imaginative unions have used the sabbatical program to introduce work rotation programs that increase employment and allow workers to take every fourth week off. Danish Prime Minister Poul Nyrup Rasmussen sees "a future society in which people can tailor their own lives, mixing work, education and parental duties according to needs."

The Labour Movement and the Shorter Workweek

Traditionally the demand for a shorter workweek, with no cut in pay, has been a consistent trade union demand. Indeed, many trade union struggles revolved around the demand for shorter hours and the eight-hour day.

The idea of a four-day workweek became popular during the Great Depression. Many saw the initiative as an effective way of redistributing work to eliminate staggering unemployment.

However, following World War II, Keynesian demand management policies were entrenched as the mechanism for regulating employment. This policy shift required the promotion of high growth rates to approach levels of full employment.

As economist Juliet Schor notes, "The flip side of

"They're ripping up YOUR insurance policy!"

Some Cuts Don't Heal!

The Liberal government plans to make drastic changes to our unemployment insurance program - 60% of workers in Canada will not be eligible for their unemployment insurance!

From weeks to hours...

"I've been working part-time since my son turned two, working as many shifts as I could get - now that the shop is closing I need my UI to tide me over till I get work - but if they start counting hours not weeks of work, I won't qualify for anything! I can't afford to lose my job and my daycare and my apartment!"

Part-time workers will need to work two to three times as long to qualify for their insurance - some may not qualify at all.

Can't find full-time work?...

"Do you eat fish? Use paper? Go on holidays? Canada depends on my seasonal employment - I didn't create this economy! There's no work off-season. My unemployment insurance may only be worth half what it was last year - how do they expect me to live?"

Every industry will be hit by these changes, and workers who can't find full-time work will be penalized.

Old and young targeted...

Young workers new to the workforce will have to work three times as long in order to qualify for replacement earnings. Older workers, who need longer to find work, will be hard hit as the maximum UI period moves from 50 to 40 weeks.

Actions...

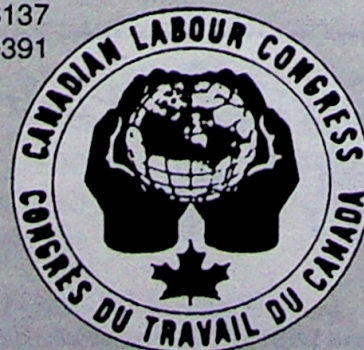
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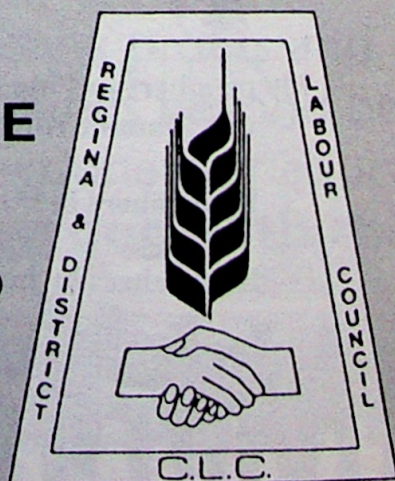
Health Care (?) American Style:

In the USA, where private health care dominates, Americans spend about 4% more of their national income on health care than Canadians, yet 37 million Americans (one in seven) have no health insurance and another 50 million have inadequate coverage. Those with insurance pay big bucks for the security that an accident or illness will not result in bankruptcy. Those who can't afford insurance are often denied appropriate treatment and many people, sick with long-term diseases like cancer or AIDS, have had their insurance cancelled.

Help stop the erosion of Medicare - we can't afford the changes that are moving us to the American two-tier system. Demand the preservation of **non-profit public health insurance** by supporting action in your community and writing letters to Prime Minister Jean Chrétien and Minister of Health Diane Marleau, House of Commons, Ottawa, ON K1A 0A6.

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growth was the emerging climate of consumerism. As a middle-class standard of living came within reach of more and more working-class people, their desires for shorter hours could no longer be taken for granted."

Thus, the post-World War II period to the early 1970s witnessed a period of relative prosperity and labour/management cooperation as unemployment was kept low and consumer spending high. The traditional demand for shorter hours was relegated to the sidelines, if not forgotten altogether.

The collapse of the Keynesian welfare state consensus has witnessed growing unemployment, falling real incomes and the erosion of social programs. Within this context, the idea of a shorter workweek has once again caught the attention of many in the labour movement and others.

The Canadian Auto Workers have been at the forefront of the movements for shorter worktime. In 1993 Chrysler Canada and the CAW reached an historic agreement at the company's minivan plant in Windsor, Ontario.

Under the agreement, a third shift was introduced, regular daily hours were cut from eight to seven-and-a-half with no cut in pay, and the option of phased-in retirement was brought in. As a result of the Chrysler-CAW agreement, 800 new jobs were created and the use of overtime curtailed.

The End of Work?

While corporate restructuring and rapid technological change are frightening prospects for most, some see rising unemployment as an opportunity to free individuals from the daily drudgery of mind-numbing, repetitive work.

Political scientist Adam Przeworski argues for the need to re-think the concepts of work and leisure. For Przeworski, socialism was never a movement for full employment but for the abolition of wage slavery.

"Freedom from unpleasant work is a great, and historically unprecedented, opportunity," Przeworski argues. Embracing leisure is the solution to unemployment, not more employment.

In his book, *The End of Work*, Jeremy Rifkin predicts that "a near-workerless economy is within sight; whether it leads to a safe haven or a terrible abyss will depend on how well civilization prepares for what is to come."

While it is common knowledge that the manufacturing sectors of the industrialized countries are shrinking, Rifkin points out that the service sector, the apparent growth sector, will not be untouched by sweeping job loss.

From 1983 to 1993, banks eliminated 37 percent of their work-force through automatic teller machines. Currently, a robot is being developed in California that will perform hip replacement surgery and some firms are already using a computerized hiring system to screen job applicants.

Within this burgeoning unemployment crisis, Rifkin sees an opportunity - the transition to a Post-Market Era. With the commercial and public sectors offering little in the way of economic security, citizens will turn towards the

"Third Sector" - the non-profit sector - for meaningful employment free from market relations.

For Rifkin, a 30-hour workweek, tax credits for volunteer work, and new work in the non-profit sector are strategies to cope with massive job loss.

The Struggle for Shorter Worktime

While Donner's advisory group stopped short of recommending a complete ban on overtime or a legislated four-day workweek, Canada's business community reacted harshly to the report's rather modest recommendations.

Canadian Chamber of Commerce president Tim Reid



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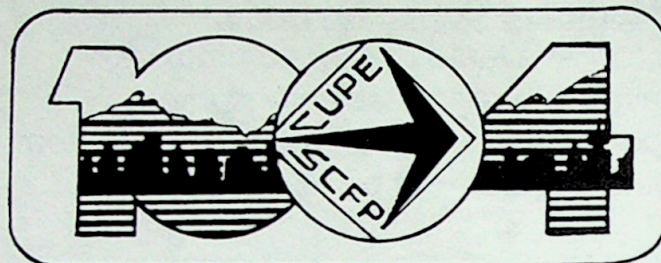
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threatened a capital strike. "Some recommendations would clearly force some businesses in Canada to think twice about expanding and may have the effect of driving businesses and jobs out of the country."

Business fears that shorter worktime will increase hiring costs and harm international competitiveness. More importantly, the class interests of business necessitate opposition to any serious attempt to eliminate unemployment.

As Polish economist Michal Kalecki argued, "Under a regime of full employment, 'the sack' would cease to play its role as a disciplinary measure. The social position of the boss would be undermined and the self assurance and class consciousness of the working class would grow."

The class instinct of business leaders "tells them that lasting full employment is unsound from their point of view and that unemployment is an integral part of the normal capitalist system."

Given the hostile reaction from the business community, any serious push for a shorter workweek will require

the formation of a strong social movement, spearheaded by trade unions.

According to the CAW pamphlet, *More time for ourselves, our children, our community*, a campaign such as this has the potential to bring together a broad coalition of progressive groups.

"Reduced worktime has been and, especially in today's circumstances can be, an issue around which to build solidarity between our own members and the unemployed, with women's organizations and among environmentalists, and with young people who face so much uncertainty."

In the midst of staggering unemployment, the idea of a shorter workweek is gaining increasing popularity, both among unions and the general public. O'Hara's Canadian Shorter Worktime Network is growing quickly, adding chapters in all major Canadian cities.

Despite the growing attraction of worktime reduction as a means of combating unemployment, the issue is not on the political agenda and the Donner report has been shelved. Shorter worktime receives scant attention in the

mainstream media and none of the main political parties have taken up the issue.

Despite this, Donner is confident that the issue will not go away. "It won't disappear so long as you have so many people unhappy about their working hours and as long as you have such continuously high unemployment."

Guy Marsden is executive assistant at CUPE Saskatchewan and a founder of the Regina chapter of the Canadian Shorter Worktime Network.

Profits up 46% at big banks

Total hits record
\$4.25 billion

BY RICK HALICHUK
BUSINESS REPORTER

ate dividend when the Royal
tells them beginning today how
it will divvy up \$80 million in

with fourth quarter earnings of
\$302 million, or 83 cents, com-
pared to a \$420 million loss a
year ago.

But unlike some of the others,
Canada's biggest

But the Royal says it isn't be-
ing overly sensitive to criticism
that it makes too much money.

"No, we're not ashamed of
our results, not in the least bit,"
Nathan Merchant, the Royal's

Executives had a very good year

From Page B1

By last fall, the Austrian-born Mr.
tronach had so firmly regained
command that he could install his
on-in-law as Magna's titular chief
executive in place of John Dod-
ridge, a U.S. engineer hired in the
meback days.

Over the years, Mr. Holland accu-
mulated options entitling him to
buy shares at prices as low as \$9.75.
In 1994, he used some of them to buy
307,000 shares at an average cost
about \$14 below prevailing market
prices.

Other big earners of 1994 included

Profits soar in 1994

From Page B1

Exports were given a bi-
the arm by the low dollar.

Not surprisingly, the 2
sector led the spurt. Genl
of Canada Ltd., Chrys
Ltd. and Magna Intern
all reported robust ear
backing on the bur

Profits
climb
at torrid
pace

Huge bank profits and executive
salaries beyond belief.

No money for education.

What's wrong with this picture?



a message from
CUPE 2419
the University of Regina
academic assistants' union.

Darkness at Napanee

Capitalism Comes to the Backcountry:
The Goodyear Invasion of Napanee
 by Bryan D. Palmer
 Between the Lines,
 720 Bathurst St., Suite 404,
 Toronto, ON M5S 2R4, 1994,
 \$15.95 plus \$3.00 shipping.
 available from Prairie Dog Books

reviewed by Garnet Dishaw

Some of this century's greatest writers have grappled with the question.

George Orwell, in his novel *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, has the wayward clerk, Winston Smith, go to the grave loving his ruthless oppressor Big Brother.

In Arthur Koestler's great novel, *Darkness at Noon*, the tough old revolutionary, Rubashov, condemns himself with a ridiculous confession at a show trial.

What is it that causes people to participate in their own oppression, in fact, eagerly line up to be humiliated at the hands of the powerful?

In *Capitalism Comes to the Backcountry*, Bryan D. Palmer also tries to answer that question.

Palmer first came to the attention of left-wing readers in 1983 with the publication of his *Working Class Experience: Rethinking the History of Canadian Labour*, an excellent account of the Canadian working class since 1800.

In 1992, a second edition of the book came out extending the story to 1991. In the foreword to *Working Class Experience*, Palmer borrows a quotation from Leon Trotsky when he promises his readers no "treacherous impartiality."

Palmer delivers on that commitment in all his writing. He is clearly on the side of workers and average folks, and against the big shots who would

like to harness up working people and drive them like mules.

Capitalism Comes to the Backcountry has the subtitle *The Goodyear Invasion of Napanee*. The book aptly describes how the giant tire manufacturer takes over the small, sleepy, eastern Ontario community of Napanee (population 4,900).

In the spring of 1987 Goodyear closed its factory in Etobicoke, throwing 1,500 members of the United Rubber Workers out of work. A few months later, the company began a very secretive search for a site to build a highly automated new plant that would employ just over 500 preferably non-union workers.

By 1993 the new factory was in full production turning out 15,000 tires a day. What happened between 1987 and 1993 is the tragic comedy recounted by Bryan Palmer in the 192 smoothly written and easy to read pages of this book.

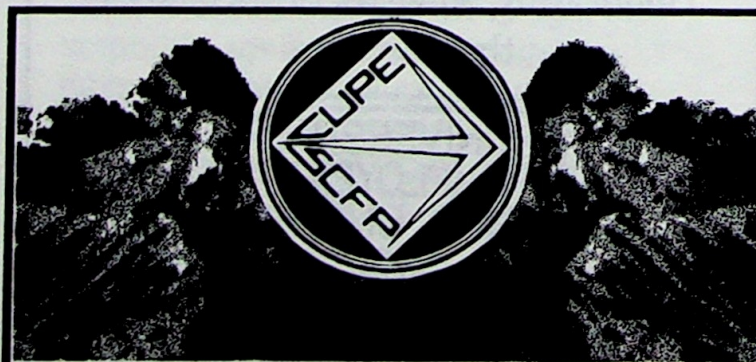
It was apparently not enough for the big American-based tire maker to secure a low-wage work-force, cheap land, a redesigned high school curriculum, and almost \$100 million in subsidies of one sort or another from various levels of government. The company also encouraged the people of Napanee to become absolutely frantic promoters of the new plant.

Napanee adopted corporate boosterism almost as a way of life. Pep rallies came to be seen as reasonable, normal behaviour, and the regimentation of newly hired plant employees was viewed as being completely desirable.

Capitalism Comes to the Backcountry is the story of predatory international capitalism going about its business, and some of the details are quite unsettling. But as more and more of our political leaders cave in to what they spinelessly refer to as "the inevitability of globalization" we are going to see more Napanees.

It's just as well if we know what the business crowd is capable of, and prepare to deal with it. Otherwise we will be no more effective than Rubashov and Winston Smith in fending off the big shots.

Garnet Dishaw is on the staff of the Saskatchewan Federation of Labour.



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Progress Without People: New Technology, Unemployment and the Message of Resistance by David Noble

**Between the Lines, 720 Bathurst St.
#404, Toronto, ON M5S 2R4, 1995,
\$15.95 plus \$3.00 shipping.
available from Prairie Dog Books**

reviewed by Guy Marsden

The Internet. The information highway. Virtual reality. Most everyone is familiar with these terms. Indeed, citizens have been bombarded with the "good news" of technological advance.

But is all this technology really "good news?" A recently released book by historian David Noble would argue otherwise.

In *Progress Without People: New Technology, Unemployment and the Message of Resistance*, Noble dissects the cult of technology and persuasively argues that we should not blindly submit to automation.

Using the nineteenth century machine-smashing Luddites as his reference point, Noble documents worker resistance to the introduction of new technology in the first few chapters.

For Noble, the actions of the Luddites and others were not irrational, as is commonly portrayed. Rather, these acts constituted struggle "at the point of production" against the present use of technology which, in most cases, resulted in job loss and domination by employers.

Rather than seeing technological progress in a deterministic fashion, Noble makes the point that the use of technology is political. Engineers and scientists design machinery for the benefit of management, not workers.

As Noble puts it, "labour-saving technologies have not been used to save workers' labour - meaning physical and mental effort - but rather to save capital labour - meaning workers (and wages)."

Despite claims that technology is required for productivity's sake, often the main reason management introduces new technology is simply to

control and deskill workers.

For the most part, workers are conscious of the job-destroying capability of new technology. One 1984 poll found corporate executives to be 39 percentage points more optimistic about factory automation than factory workers.

However, Noble argues that the leadership elements of the working class - labour leaders and socialists - have traditionally bought into the ideology of progress and the promise of future prosperity and economic growth.

According to Noble, the political and ideological subordination of workers by its leadership effectively stifled any coordinated opposition to the introduction of new technology and ensured "the continued and strengthened hegemony of the doctrine of technological progress, as well as of the capitalist system."

As for the socialists, technology was seen as emancipatory. Indeed, Noble argues that technological progress, and the resultant productivity, was key to the theory of scientific socialism.

"If the capitalists apologized for and rallied behind technological progress, the socialists revered it," Noble writes.

Short of sabotage, what does Noble prescribe as a strategy of resistance?

A criteria could be developed to target certain technologies that are particularly destructive and degrading or that management relies heavily on. Moratoriums could buy time to introduce technology in a more socially responsible manner.

"We have environmental impact statements, why do we not have employee impact statements? Required by all employers who wish to introduce new methods, these would demand an assessment of and solutions to likely problems before implementation."

For Noble, the Luddites offer an inspiring example of resistance.

"It is necessary now to remind ourselves of this lost tradition and confidently to reassert it. To the dictum, you can't stop progress, we must learn to respond: of course you can."

Progress Without People is a book long overdue. Noble has produced an invaluable exposé of the technology fetish, and offers a rallying cry that we cannot afford to ignore. Luddites of the world unite!

Guy Marsden is "forced" to use a Pentium computer at his workplace.

THE OTHER MEXICO

THE NORTH AMERICAN TRIANGLE COMPLETED

John W. Warnock . Photographs by Elaine Brière

The harsh program imposed on Mexicans over the past thirteen years has created a Mexico with the highest unemployment in its history, a dramatic increase in poverty, and gross inequalities in income and wealth, all the while making illicit drugs an important industry. President Carlos Salinas was praised by politicians, bankers and foreign investors for bringing a right wing revolution to Mexico. Mexicans have a long history of resistance to domination and this book describes how they have stepped up their efforts to create an alternative, more humane society.

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- ✓ Public Administration



Our Platform:

- ✓ Create good health - we need public policies that make for healthy people;
- ✓ Provide quality care from large institutions to the home - fewer large institutions must mean increased community facilities;
- ✓ Protect our investment in our workers - they are a tremendous resource. With secure employment, they can participate more fully in restructuring;
- ✓ Ensure fair wages for all health care providers - reform should not shift the burden to under- or unpaid women, or rob communities of the economic benefits of "good jobs;"
- ✓ Stop fee-for-service payments - which contributes to overbooking, overprescribing and overtreatment;
- ✓ Eliminate profit-making from illness - by banning user-fees and stopping the de-insuring of services;
- ✓ Reduce drug costs - by encouraging the government to work to repeal drug patent legislation;
- ✓ Promote genuine community health centres - controlled by users and staffed by salaried, multi-disciplinary teams;
- ✓ Expand the role of non-physician health providers - including nurses and midwives;
- ✓ Make the system more democratic - to involve everyone - patients, workers and the public - in decision making.

...it's your health care system!

Make your vote count!

For information on candidates in your area,
contact the Saskatchewan Health Coalition:
Saskatoon: Ed Holgate 384-6800 or Nancy Allan 652-0300
Regina: Al Taylor 569-0243



SAY "What?"

WHO'S STUPID?

"If you are unskilled and uneducated, your job is going south. Skilled workers, educated people are going to do fine 'cause those are the kinds of jobs NAFTA is going to create. If we are going to start rewarding no skills and stupid people, I'm serious, let the unskilled jobs that take absolutely no knowledge whatsoever to do - let stupid and unskilled Mexicans do that work."

- Rush Limbaugh,
right-wing American radio
talk show host.

MACHINES VS PEOPLE

"Maybe in the Far East wages are low enough to maintain manual assembly, but here it's still cheaper to bring in machines. Machines don't need costly job training, don't get sick, and don't get paid vacations."

- Edgardo Layva,
personnel manager for Panasonic's
TV assembly plant in Chalco,
Mexico.



SIX FEET UNDERGROUND

"I'm thinking of auctioning this [NDP labour legislation] off myself between now and election day with the successful bidder joining me at Queen's Park to actually light the match when we burn and rip up this bill, putting it where it belongs, six feet underground forever."

- Mike Harris,
then leader of the Ontario Conservative Party, after the Tories
successfully won the bid for a copy of the NDP's labour legislation at
an NDP fundraising auction, November 1994.

PIN HEAD

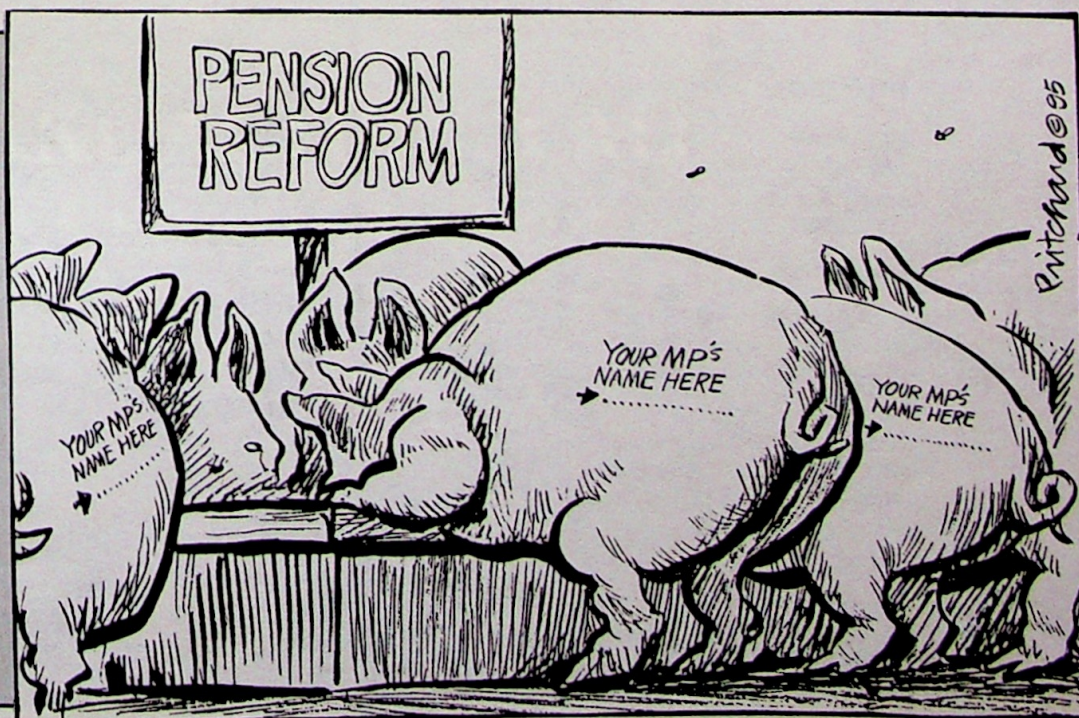
"I know as much about housing as you can put on the head of a pin and still have room left over for the Lord's Prayer."

- Al Leach,
Ontario Municipal Affairs and Housing Minister, in a speech to the
Association of Municipalities of Ontario, August 21, 1995.

FOUR LETTER WORD?

"I have seen here problems with ethics, problems with integrity and problems with arrogance to the hilt. However, the real problem in the House is a four letter word called greed."

- Randy White,
Reform Party of Canada
MP for Fraser Valley West,
speaking about MPs'
pensions in the House of
Commons, June 22, 1995.
White, an accountant by
training, either can't count,
can't spell, or both.



A Better Tomorrow

*The days of finding a good-paying job
are becoming a thing of the past.*

by George Martin Manz

Back in 1975, after I graduated from university, I went to a steel plant, applied for a job and got hired.

Later, when I got tired of working with cancer-producing products like asbestos and toluene, I got a job working at Canada Post.

After six months of working the midnight shift, I saw a better job on the horizon, so I got a job in construction. Back then it was pretty easy to find a job and you could usually count on UI to fill in the gaps when no jobs were available.

Today there are far too many people chasing far too few jobs. No longer can you quit your job at Chrysler in Windsor on Monday and find a new one at Ford on Tuesday. Now you'll face stiff competition getting a much lower-paying

job dealing blackjack at the casino.

Jobs in manufacturing are dwindling across the country and around the world. Corporations are laying off thousands of workers at a time, in their attempts to compete with other corporations to raise their profit margins. And they're not just shutting down a factory in Toronto and moving it to a lower-paying province; they're moving to North Carolina with its right-to-work laws or Mexico with its lack of environmental controls.

Governments at all levels are throwing tens of thousands of people out of permanent, well-paying jobs. The feds announced that they're chopping 45,000 jobs, and that's just the beginning.

In Alberta, premier Ralph Klein privatized government departments and closed hospitals. Not to be outdone, Ontario premier Mike "the knife" Harris is privatizing everything in his path.

And what are these well-paying, full-time jobs being replaced with? The new jobs of the present and the future are more often than not low-paying, part-time, temporary jobs. Take Saskatchewan for example.

Sears Canada Inc. consolidated its catalogue shopping centres in one place - Regina. The provincial govern-



ment made a big fuss over the hundreds of "new jobs" that were coming into the province.

They're low-paying, predominantly part-time jobs, most of which are done by women who sit by a phone and do the same thing over and over: enter bits of information on a software program on a computer and then go on to the next call.

Other new jobs that are being lured to the province are similar: part-time jobs in telemarketing or call centres with their 1-800 numbers.

Last year Saskatchewan led the nation in the number of part-time jobs. The province also had ten percent of its labour force working more than one job, again leading the country.

The Saskatchewan government is creating new jobs in casinos, trying to lure gamblers to part with their dollars in Saskatchewan rather than Las Vegas.

Those who aren't "lucky" enough to find jobs in casinos and call centres are having to create their own jobs working in converted rooms in their basements or on their kitchen table. They often work long hours for lousy pay, just trying to make ends meet. And if the present is bad for people, the future looks even worse. I don't know about you, but I want the future to be different. I want people to have jobs that they like to do, in a society that treats people with respect, where we control our own lives and we can look forward to a better tomorrow.

George Martin Manz is managing editor of Briarpatch magazine.

AIDS Awareness Week

FILM PROGRAM

Three short films offered in cooperation with AIDS Regina for AIDS Awareness Week 1995.

Teens and AIDS: Real People, Real Stories (18 min.)

People infected in their teens warn others of the risks and send a strong message that it can happen to anyone who takes risks. The program offers vital information and advice.

Coming out of the Shadows (28 min.)

A Canadian produced film brings into focus the realities of life for women with HIV and AIDS. One of these realities is having to care for spouses and children also infected.

Gospel of AIDS: Dying is Not a Sin (57 min.)

In Rwanda, one adult in three is HIV positive. The Catholic Church appears to be at odds with official church teaching as priests and nuns teach safe sex and condom use.

Wednesday, October 11, 7:00 p.m.
RPL Film Theatre, Lower Level
Central Library, 2311-12th Avenue
FREE ADMISSION



Regina Public Library

Profits up 46% at big banks

Total hits record
\$4.25 billion

By Rick Haliechuk
BUSINESS REPORTER

ate dividend when the Royal
tells them beginning today how
it will divvy up \$80 million in
bonus money.

Collectively, Canada's Big Six
banks hauled in a record \$4.25

with fourth quarter earnings of
\$302 million, or 83 cents, com-
pared to a \$420 million loss a
year ago.

But unlike some of the others,
the Royal, Canada's biggest

But the Royal says it isn't be-
ing overly sensitive to criticism
that it makes too much money.

"No, we're not ashamed of
our results, not in the least bit,"

Nabanita Merchant, the Royal's

The Toronto Star, December 7, 1994

They're banking on Canada's debt. It's time they paid their share.

A message from working people across Canada.

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POISONS
DON'T PUT UP**



WITH IT



CANADIAN UNION OF PUBLIC EMPLOYEES